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## Colonialism, Neoliberalism, Education and Culture in Cameroon

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## **Colonialism, Neoliberalism, Education and Culture in Cameroon**

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## **Abstract**

Neocolonialism and neoliberalism are all offshoots or veiled forms of colonialism. The history of independence for colonized peoples in the late 1950s to mid 1960s was a farce. In this work, I argue that colonialism only changed phase, switching into its more insidious form. This has had a very negative effect on education and culture in Cameroon, which has largely remained dependent on the West, singularly France, Britain, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, and Italy. Neoliberalism has brought destitution and deprived the people of their right to dignity as human beings. While I request that the West and America take their hands off the African continent, I challenge the Cameroonian to “SANKOFA”, an Akan (a tribe in Ghana) word which means to go back to the past, to learn from the wisdom of ancestors in order to move forward. Such a move will help sustain their hope in this time of utter misery.

## **Dedication**

**To my beloved mother**

**Mama Josephine Winkii Diang**

## **Acknowledgement**

“One hand cannot tie a bundle” as the African proverb states is an apt description of what I experienced in the process of writing this paper. This paper would not have been accomplished without the many hands that supported the process right from the beginning. Immense thanks to my professors: Drs. Stephen Haymes, Kenneth Saltman and Enora Brown. Your gentle support and insistence that it is my work and I am the author gave me the courage and confidence I needed to overcome all hurdles till the end. To you all I am grateful.

I am profoundly grateful to the Franciscan Common Venture Communities (FCV): The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA), the Sister of St Francis (OSF), the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist (FSE), and the Tertiary Sisters of St Francis of Assisi (TSSF). For all your financial and spiritual support I say thank you. I give special thanks to all the sisters at Clare Hall. For your constant words of encouragement I say thank you. It’s been a pleasure living and writing this paper in your midst.

I give very special thanks to Mr. Boh Herbert who besides all the pertinent suggestions dotted every “i” and cut every “t” rendering this work readable.

Dr. Tatah Mentan, thank you for your constant encouragement, your readiness to read over my work despite all your commitments and the pool of ideas and resources you provided me with. I deeply appreciate all.

And to all of you my wonderful and supportive friends, who stood by me, encouraged me and have walked this journey with me to the end. I hold you dear.



## **The new word: neoliberalism**

### **Introduction**

Everyone would agree that knowledge is power. Ignorance blunts that power. It is not possible to be knowledgeable of everything, but knowledge of certain issues are warranted in to fully assume certain responsibilities. For a teacher, ignorance of strategic information about the society is dangerous for both the teacher and students because they can never be the agents of change that society expects. Such was my experience about neoliberal policy implementation in Cameroon.

Neoliberalism has been the catch word for me in the last two years. I remember learning about neoliberalism in one of my first classes. The issue being discussed was neoliberalism in America and how it was affecting education and the lives of the middle class. Not being American, my immediate response was to meditate about what I was hearing in terms of the experience I was familiar with in my country. As I sat in the class listening to the heated discussion, I searched my mind, making all the possible connections and links I could to the presence of such a reality in Cameroon and how it was affecting the lives of the people. It was my first time of hearing the word neoliberalism. It reminded me of neocolonialism, the system whereby former colonial powers continued to use various methods to maintain their imperial power over former colonies. They do this through political, cultural, religious, ideological and above all through continuous economic exploitation. I wondered what the difference between these two words would be. I learnt from the same class that neoliberalism advocated a free market system with little hindrance to the exchange of goods and services within and across borders. It promotes private endeavors or entrepreneurship, but how different is it

from neocolonialism? This will be discussed in great detail later on. Between the 1950s to mid1960 the majority of African countries were granted independence from colonial rule. One might want to ask if this was true independence or just “make believe”. Did colonialism end? I cannot delve much into these questions now but suffice it to say that the preeminence of the colonizers in the independent state is proof that there was no true independence. The story is told of Africans who, a few short years after independence grew just as frustrated of the limited freedom independence had ushered in compared to colonialism that they sarcastically asked, ‘when will independence end’? Historians have, in an effort to facilitate study of history, divided up the past and its events into pre-colonial, colonial, post- colonial or neocolonial and now neoliberal.

In this thesis I argue that neoliberalism is a renewed manifestation of colonialism at its worst. I also argue that colonialism took a subtle mood of existence at independence. Kwame Nkrumah, the president of Ghana, Africa’s first country to gain national sovereignty, named this subtle control neocolonialism. Neocolonialism is the period of pseudo –independence, whereby the European powers continued to meddle in the affairs of the new independent states through education, military dominance, trade and other imperialistic ways. The independent states were, indeed, more dependent at independence than ever. It is in the face of all these experiences of dependence that I argue that colonialism never ended in Cameroon and all over Africa. It simply gave birth to neocolonialism which evolved into neoliberalism: a progression of hegemonic imperialism. Hegemonic imperialism continues to underlie the systems of control exerted on Africa by the West. My focus is on Cameroon and the impact of these systems on education and culture. The reference point in this analysis will be education and culture. I

will take a critical look at colonialism, as a process that has evolved to neocolonialism and to neoliberalism. To make for better understanding some highlights will be given on the pre-colonial period. I will then address the neocolonial period and its progress to neoliberalism. The neocolonial period lasted for about ten years after independence and has been quickly replaced by the imposition of neoliberal policies, with the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as its agents.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The colonial period: indigenous education in Cameroon**

#### **Introduction**

A good place to start a discussion on neoliberalism is the colonial period because it is the foundation upon which most other forms of manipulation of Africa by the West are set. Neoliberalism is the blooming of the seeds of colonialism except for the fact that its flowers are neither beautiful, nor attractive. Instead the neoliberal theory that unleashing the market will enhance economic prosperity of the majority has been proven to be incorrect (Saltman, 2006) and its practice has brought much pain, frustration and despair in Africa, especially among the poor. For a clearer understanding of colonial education and its subsequent development, I will set the scene by discussing pre-colonial education.

#### **Pre-colonial education**

During the colonial period, missionaries who came along as a package with the political colonizers imagined that they were bringing civilization and education to Africa. Such a thought was far from the truth. The continent had a civilization dating back many centuries and Africans already had a high value for education. Their education was relevant and to the point. Being mostly grounded on and taught through oral traditions their curriculum had largely not been documented, and only few of their institutions of learning had a fixed classroom as in the Western style. Yet their education was practical with life itself as the classroom (Abdi, 2012). It emanated from their understanding of “the physical, social and spiritual environments” (Kanu, 2006, p. 207) Education was

meant to address the needs of the whole person; physical, moral, emotional and spiritual. It was tailored to the environment and human needs and the objective was to help the individual fit in well into the society, be of service to self and the whole community (Kanu, 2006; Abdi, 2012). As Rodney (1982) states, it was linked to social life and it dealt with the whole person, emotionally, physically, spiritually and mentally.

Although it mostly had no written texts,<sup>1</sup> it was both formal and informal and spread all through one's life until death. According to Kanu (2006) African education is grounded in norms, values and tradition handed down from generations past. These norms, values and traditions can be summed up in three features namely; interwoven theory and practice, communalism in African social thought and practice and the philosophical thoughts built on stories, anecdotes and proverbs.

Each person grew up groomed in the knowledge of what to expect of self and what the society expected of him or her in the community and responded judiciously. Some communities emphasized the education of the men more than that of the women, a practice still prevalent in some parts of Cameroon and Africa today. Others gave equal importance to both with rites set up for both groups. Still others considered the education of both men and women as important but emphasized that it had to be in separate locations. Achebe (1958) highlights this in his novel, *Things Fall Apart*, when he declares that it was the role of the father to bring up his sons in a manly manner while the woman taught her daughters what it meant to be a woman. There was always a male teacher in the village for the education of the men, supplementing from the role played by the father as well as a female teacher for the girls in addition to the mother. Unfortunately this

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<sup>1</sup> The writing of the people of Foubam - Cameroon has been shown to date to pre-colonial days.

preparation for life was not incorporated into the Western formal education system. It remained as fragments and continued to be practiced informally, making Western education to stand out as a foreign thing. For example, in Cameroon students learn English and Math in school and once they are home they put away their school bag with the books and return to the use of the local language and in the practice of the professions that guarantee survival. They notably go off to the farm to help with farming, tending the crop or harvesting beans, potatoes or coffee. None of these aspects of teaching, survival, ordinary living and education were ever incorporated into the school system. Today there is a great effort to revive these informal ways of teaching and learning and to incorporate them into the education system. There are many leading African educationists advocating for African indigenous education (Abdi et al, 2006).

African formal education was according to age group. It consisted principally of initiation rites which allowed one to belong to a particular age group or gave one the permission to perform some services to the community. Boys, for example, had initiation into manhood and girls had initiation into womanhood. To be initiated into womanhood or manhood was an indication that the individual was ready to take up the responsibilities of marriage, defending the clan, bringing forth and raising children. Rites were usually carried out at the end of one stage of growth, and were conducted as a welcome in the next stage. It was usually a communal affair full of fest and pomp. Informal education was not left to the parents but was the affair of the whole village. It was every parent's responsibility to show a good example to all children as they grew up and, where necessary, to tell them what was right or wrong, good and noble and what would keep the good name of the family. As noted earlier, the curriculum was life and education was

meant to prepare the young person to fit into society and be useful to himself or herself as well as to the community. In the words of Rodney (1982, p.239), “the most crucial aspect of pre-colonial African education was its relevance to Africans” in sharp contrast with what would be introduced by colonialists. Moreover, African education was for the preservation of the tribe’s cultural heritage, the family and the clan. Using stories, legends, folktales and proverbs, a lot of information was passed on for reflection and creation of further knowledge. Knowledge, skills, ideas, attitudes and patterns of behavior were passed on a constant basis, including while everyone sat around the fireside in the evening or in the city square where feasts were celebrated or in shrines where sacrifices were offered to the gods or to God. All these provided good education to enable everyone to fit into society. There is no doubt that not everyone cherished or went along with this program. However, African education was not utopia because it was connected to real life.

### **Colonial Education**

London (2006, p. 38) presents a classical definition of colonialism offered by anthropologist George Ballandier and he says: “colonialism refers to the ‘domination imposed by a foreign majority, racially and culturally different, over a materially weaker indigenous majority in the same racial (or ethnic) and cultural superiority. London (ibid) advances David Spurr’s explanation which points out that in the contact zone, a set of relations comes into play based on the nature of the two cultures, one of which is technologically advanced and economically powerful, while the other lacks technology or complex economy: the colonized is forced to play the subordinate role and the colonizing

society resorts to some force and pseudo justifications and stereotyped behaviors. It is, in fact, a process of cultural production and psychologization and even with decolonization it has not come to an end. It began with the arrival of colonizers but did not end with their departure, and that is if one believes that the colonizers ever left. Southard (1997) defines colonialism as a situation where one territory takes control of another, either through force or by acquisition. Colonizing nations enforce their own form of schooling within their colonies. Through education or schooling they consolidate foreign rule in the territory. As he suggests in his definition, colonialists enforced their own schooling on the conquered peoples, thus imparting their own philosophies and style of life on the conquered. Colonialism changed the state of affairs for Cameroonians and Africans as a whole.<sup>2</sup> In truth, the above definition fits the experience of Cameroon and many of the colonized people all over the world.

In the case of Cameroon, history holds that it all began with the curiosity of the Portuguese explorers whose primary purpose at the time was to explore the world (Tambo, 1995). Soon other nations like Britain, France and Belgium followed with the pious idea of converting the pagans, “*mission civilatrice*” or civilizing mission as Kano (2006) describes it. They organized military campaigns against the resistant Africans. They conquered the people and took control of them and their land (Bell, 1986). Then they decided to appropriate the land for the grandeur of their home countries (Konings 2011). What started as curiosity to know what was out there – if one believes the pretext offered by way of explanation in a majority of history books - led to a discovery of

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<sup>2</sup> This discussion of colonialism in Cameroon does not consider the influence of the Portuguese who “discovered” and named it, nor the Germans who preceded the English and French. All that is discussed in this paper refers to the English and the French as well as all those who are presently involved in the exploitation of Cameroon in the name of economic development.



wealth and fed the greed to own and to plunder. So they fought and conquered the people. They not only owned them and their land but went further to conquer their minds (Rodney, 1986).

Colonialism altered Cameroon's way of education, its thinking, its path to development and its way of worship or religion. The conquerors introduced schooling in the European style. Education in the Western style was considered an investment on human capital. It was geared toward increase in productivity and, therefore, an educated community was considered a productive one. They educated the Africans using European languages, literature, history and geography. Africans were made to recite European rhymes and tell stories of European heroes (the same people who savaged Africans in some cases) whom they were expected to emulate while African civilization and development was considered primitive and ineffective (Abdi, 2012). Bell (1986) states that during the colonial era and within the 'modernization' school of development the tendency was to dismiss as insignificant developments in African societies prior to European colonization. Prominent among these sidelined developments were the African systems of education, African religion and culture.

The culture of the people which was looked upon as primitive was replaced by the inculcation of Western views while African religions were considered animistic or worship of false gods. Koranic scholars imposed Islam while missionaries preached the Christian religion and through these teachings, Cameroon's traditional practices were condemned and classified as satanic, animistic and not to be practiced. They were replaced by Islam and Christianity in which they preached Allah and the Christian God who blesses and punishes as well. The new religions helped to pacify the people from

rising up against the injustices they experienced from the colonialists. It emphasized forgiveness, submissiveness and patience, arguing that life on earth was temporary and should be a preparation for eternal life (Kano, 2006). Such teaching blunted the people's desire to stand up for their rights. They remained sober and bore all the abuses and injustices they experienced in their dealings with the colonialists. The people grew more and more alienated from their culture and helped to learnt how to undermine their traditional authority (Achebe, 1959). Muslims and Christian missionaries started schools to facilitate their teaching of religion and later on the graduates of these schools were trained or to be more appropriate, brainwashed to serve the purpose of the colonial administration. According to Rodney (ibid) schools were used to train Africans to work in the local administration at the lowest ranks and to staff the firms of the private European capitalists with cheap labor. It culminated in subordination, exploitation and creation of mental confusion. In fact, it can be argued without a doubt, that slavery and colonialism lie at the root of the contemporary problems of Africa, because the former stole and carried away Africa's strongest at a time when labor was a key input to development and the latter separated the people from their norms, values and traditions which were part of their fabric, replacing them with foreign norms, values, and traditions which till this day they are still struggling to ingest. They have remained confused and displaced.

Colonialism generated a particular way of looking at the world in both the metropolis and within the colonies. The people from the metropolis considered themselves knowledgeable, human and superior to the people from the colonies. They treated them as sub-human, with strange ideas, strange languages; as worshippers of trees and animals

and, therefore, good enough only to be their slaves. They proceeded to deprive them of their language, customs and traditions and worked to change their psyches as well (Rodney; 1986 Kano, 2006). The British and the French expressed superiority of their culture over Cameroonian cultures, rendering the latter inferior. They made the peoples of Cameroon unsure of themselves. They suppressed and ridiculed the African heritage and through Islam and Christianity created for them a new identity with new Muslim and Christian names. They under looked their way of education and imposed European education which promoted personal achievement (Carnoy, 1974). Its content and teaching methods were intended to achieve limited instrumental purposes. It was foreign and divorced from the students' and teachers' culture and lived experience, and it was transmitted in ways that hindered reflection, and the courage to challenge or to question (Kano, 2006).

As already mentioned above, colonial education had little or no relevance to African life. It aimed at assimilation and the colonized were forced to conform to the cultures and traditions of the colonizers. Viswanathan (1989) observes that cultural assimilation is the most effective form of political action because cultural domination works by imposing consent and often precedes conquest by force. Education or schooling is the most effective tool in the process of assimilation. It is worth reiterating here that colonial education separated students from the life and needs of the community; it remained a foreign concept because its curriculum was aimed at promoting British and French interests in Cameroon, not life in the local community. Colonialism disrupted traditional education, halting its further development to a very great extent. African technology was not exempt.

Before British and French influence in Cameroon, it had earlier on been explored by the Portuguese, who named it Cameroon. It was colonized by the Germans who were later on defeated by the English and the French during World War I. To the English and the French, Cameroon was given in trusteeship by the United Nations Organization (Tambo, 2006). Cameroonians, like all other Africans, never accepted colonialism. They continued to resist it despite the brainwashing because they valued their independence not only from Europeans but also from domination by other tribes (Carnoy 1974). They resisted European domination all the time till the opportunity came for independence. Independence freed them symbolically from domination by the Europeans – as made most glaring by the physical presence of whites in leadership roles within the political, military, judicial, economic, financial and other institutions of state - but it created a new form of domination and occupancy called neocolonialism – in which the black political, economic, and financial elite have remained puppets for a system still anchored on the good, old time colonial roots.

### **Neocolonialism**

Neocolonialism describes the system of veiled “African on African colonialism” that has marked most of Africa’s post-independence decades. London (2006), quoting Bill Ashcroft and his colleagues, says that neocolonialism or post colonialism is primarily concerned with “a sustained attention to the imperial process in colonial and neo-colonial societies, and with an examination of the strategies to subvert the actual material and discursive effects of that process. At the end of World War II the soldiers returning from

war asked themselves why they gave their lives to keep Europe free from Fascism and Nazism meanwhile they were not free in their own countries. Indeed, life as a colonial subject was hardly better than life under Fascism or Nazism (Explore Africa, n.d). That led to a wave of continental requests for independence. Faced with requests coming from men who had borne arms and fought battles, the colonialists generally had no stomach for a fight, and unwillingly granted independence. Carnoy (1974) attributes the boldness to request for independence from the formal schooling they received. Europeans could not resist. After all, they had discovered new ways of keeping the Africans subordinate: through their economy.

The new system of control did not require the physical presence of the colonialists. The years of dominating and subduing the colonies had driven it into the minds of the indigenes that they belonged to the imperial powers that controlled them. It had already been agreed before the 1884 Berlin Conference that the colonies would trade only with the super powers that ruled them and only in raw materials, like cocoa, coffee, and cotton. The colonial leaders were smart to influence the choice of the new leaders whom they had been wise to train (in their European ways) in their home countries. To obtain the loyalty of the new leader of the independent nation, it was strategic to keep European troops in the colony to protect the new leaders. In Cameroon for example, two French generals were assigned to head the trained elite force with the added responsibility of protecting the first president of Cameroon Amadou Ahidjio, (Konings, 2011). It is ironical that the people fought for their independence and after having chosen one of theirs, the colonialists offer to protect him insinuating that his own people were dangerous to him.

They also controlled the colony through economic and monetary means. The vast majority of freshly-freed colonies continued to use the currency from the metropolis. In the case of Cameroon, the currency in use was and has remained a lower quality French franc, known as the CFA franc. Nkrumah (1967), in his book “Neocolonialism” exposed how foreign companies and governments were enriching themselves at the expense of the African people. The colonialists took charge of the running cost of the state, providing civil servants and assigning them in positions where they would dictate policy. They exerted monetary control over exchange rates through a banking system controlled by imperial power. Foreign capital was used for exploitation of the colony rather than for its development. Through this approach to the colonies, the dependency and protective attitude was established and engraved in the Africans. It remains one of the biggest bates for the Africans today in their dealings with the West. Nkrumah (1965) describes neocolonialism as the socio economic and political control exercised by the colonialists who continued to control their former colonies economically, politically linguistically and culturally. By promoting the culture of the colonialist in a country, cultural assimilation was facilitated thus opening the national economy to the multinational corporations of the neocolonial country.

### **Cameroon after independence**

Cameroon’s experience at independence was unique in some aspects, but to a large extent, much like that of all other African nations (English and French speaking Cameroons had unique experiences for all of Africa, but both were alike in misfortune).

As earlier noted, most of the African nations agitated against colonial rule and were granted independence between the late 1950s and early 1960s (Rodney, 1982). At independence the new indigenous leaders, schooled within the European institutions abroad and influenced by their ideologies, were now faced with the practical role of leading their fellow indigenes (Bell, 1986). Independence was make-believe because the colonialists still had very strong footholds in their previous colonies (Rodney 1982; Konings, 2011). From about the first six to eleven years into indigenous administration these territories were thrown into the worst crisis – the rush to plunder Africa of its natural resources - which has persisted until today. By the early 1970s some African states were already steeped in the crisis that would make the situations of their countries worse than when they were under colonial rule. At least under colonial rule, the colonial leaders had a sense of responsibility toward the colony, but having granted it independence, it was as if the greed for its raw materials was let loose with no corresponding interest in the wellbeing of the territories.

France and Britain reluctantly granted independence to the Cameroons in 1960 (for French-speaking Cameroon) and 1961 (for English-speaking Cameroon). The two Cameroons were united, as one people, again under a two-state federal system as part of the agreement granting independence to the English-speaking part. Under one administrative rule, the country's economy was booming. Agriculture, the oil industry and other aspects were being developed with the hope of instituting domestic capital (Konings, 2011) which was conspicuously absent. Employment rates were high and families were happy. This happiness was short lived because although official decolonization had taken place, in reality the colonies were still being controlled by the

former colonialists. Past and present international economic arrangements with France and Britain maintained colonial control (Ibid). A crucial area of control was the request that Cameroon (and other underdeveloped nations) maintain their role as primary producers in the world market and that they sell their produce only to the former colonialists. The purpose of this rule was to promote dependency which kept the colonies underdeveloped and needy (Rodney, 1986).

Cameroon experienced the negative effects of having the prices of its products determined by the buyers who at this time were strictly former colonizers, France and Britain. In fact, the first few years after independence were followed by persistent efforts by the colonialists to continue the domination of Africa. This led Cameroon to unfortunately accrue a high foreign debt since its imports always out priced its exports. This situation was made worse when Volcker, the Chairman of the US Federal Reserve instituted a draconian shift in US monetary policy. The unprecedented drop in the export prices of its cash crops was a very grievous blow to this young economy. He discarded the Keynesian fiscal and monetary policy which advocates full employment with workers union, for a new policy designed to control inflation. Interest rates, which were almost zero, within a short time rose to about 20 percent by July 1981. A long deep recession followed. It brought a lot of poverty and misery. Volcker argued that his action was the only way out of the grumbling crisis of stagflation in the US and much of the global economy throughout the 1970s (Harvey, 2005). It was the same story with other African territories. Many of the developing countries were hungry for credit (ibid). The IMF and the World Bank were ready with huge sums of money available as loans on very non-simplified and complicated terms (Harrison, 2010). The role of the IMF, which was now



completely purged of the Keynesian ways, was now changed definitively. They became centers for the propagation and enforcement of neoliberal theories: free market fundamentalism, privatization and a cut in welfare expenditures. Cameroon resisted accepting these loans and carried out some internal changes but due to the persisted drop in world market prices and poor internal management of the situation, high inflation caused by persistent devaluation of the CFA franc, (the common currency of Cameroon and 13 other African states), made the situation more difficult (Nkama 2006, Konings, 2012). Konings notes sadly that: “Cameroon used to be one of the most prosperous and stable countries in West-Central Africa but since the mid-1980s onward, it has been facing an unprecedented economic and political crisis” (2003, p.462,). Cameroon could no longer escape from asking the Bretton Woods institution for help following the deteriorating economic situation (ibid). In 1987 it was forced to turn to the IMF and the World Bank for loans (Tchoungui et al, 1995).

The forgone discussion exposes the experience of Cameroon and most of the underdeveloped world before colonization, during colonization and at independence and beyond. The purpose of this presentation has been to reveal how these early periods prepared the foundation of the future problems of Cameroon and all of Africa. Education was the vehicle through which much of this grounding was done.

### **Neocolonial Education and Indigenous Education**

At independence Cameroon continued do everything in much the same way as the colonialists had done. Education was not exempt. Colonialism having sidelined its own

education, it (Cameroon) willingly embraced the education of the colonialists. It was as Kanu (2006) describes it geared toward human capital. The human capital theory believes that education plays a very indispensable role in improving the productive capacity of a population. Therefore, funding education is a worthwhile priority because it promotes economic development. Such emphasis has led to the popularity of technical model of curriculum development which calls for a rationalization of education to achieve the best economic dividends and reap from educational investments. By so doing it emphasizes individual achievement as opposed to communal achievement. In indigenous education, however, the emphasis on individual achievement as the bedrock of human development, and educational ends are not usually separated from the means. The aims, content, methodology and evaluation of education are all merged, producing an education that is effective and functional for the society. Therefore, the Western school environment provides a complete disconnect for teachers and students from an indigenous sociocultural background. This probably is the reason for the foreignness of the Western curriculum.

In honest response to what he believed education had enabled him to achieve (he was a post office clerk before going into politics) and determined to produce a nation of well-educated citizens, the first Cameroonian Head of State, Ahmadu Ahidjio, concentrated his efforts in promoting education at all levels: He opened many state primary schools as well as secondary schools in strategic areas to promote education, making education more easily accessible when compared to his African peers. Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) was opened in 1961 for the formation of teachers followed by the first state university in 1962 (Tambo, 2003). Students were subsidized to learn at the tertiary level

until the late 1980s. Cameroonians manifested a strong adherence to formal and informal systems of education, handing down the tradition, culture, customs and other important values to the youth, preparing them to become responsible people in the community (Mbiti, 1990).

Many African tribes gradually embraced Western education especially for the good future it promised (Carnoy, 1974). They embraced it with the same enthusiasm with which they practiced their own education. In fact, many African nations hang on to the educational heritage from the colonialist as a legacy and are ready to do anything to protect it. Such has been the situation manifested in the subsystems of education in Cameroon. According to Carriero (1988) the roots of the modern education system are found in Prussian military system. Children were ripped away from their parents while they were still young and pliable enough to be molded into submissive soldiers who would not question the status quo. It was best accomplished through the methodical destruction of imagination, desires, and goals, which effectively obliterated the capacity to form original ideas and think critically. This is what colonialism did to the Cameroonians and other colonial peoples. Colonial education was meant to make the indigenous people submissive to the colonialists (Kano 2006). As Bacchus (2006, p. 260) indicates the challenge of the ideological state Apparatus was “to educate and where necessary indoctrinate the colonized to continue to accept a vision of reality where they occupied the inferior role both in status and the jobs they were allowed to fill. They were socialized to believe in the cultural and intellectual superiority of the colonizers and helped to denigrate their own abilities and their cultures. Their efforts were a success since they kept them loyal. At independence the schools the colonizers had created

carried on the curriculum as it was with very minimal changes. This, in a way, continued the propagation of the colonial rule. The student's scripts for the General Certificate Examinations (GCE) in Cameroon, for example, were graded in Britain by the British for several years. It is only in recent years that the exams are set and student answers corrected in Cameroon by Cameroonians. Elderly Cameroonians are known to brag about having earned their pass into university education from what they call "London GCE", looking down on those who earned a GCE certificate from the exam system administered by Cameroonians.

Since Cameroon was partitioned between the English and the French after World War I, it was exposed to the educational systems that were prevalent in both metropolises. At independence the French speaking part of Cameroon, commonly referred to as Francophone Cameroon, held on to its inheritance of the French system of education while the English speaking part of Cameroon, also known as Anglophone Cameroon, held on tightly to their heritage from the British. It is important to recall again that the education system of both nations was instituted in Cameroon purely for colonial purposes (Carnoy, 1974; Rodney, 1982; Bell, 1986). Apart from the fact that it was an easy way to assimilation and marginalization of the cultures of the colonized, it was also meant for easy communication with the indigenes and easy exploitation of resources. Rote learning and memorization known for its ability to prohibit creative thinking was the ordinary approach to teaching and learning (Kano, 2003). Unfortunately, such a stale method of teaching and learning has been perpetuated over the 50 years since independence. Perhaps, if Cameroonians at independence had incorporated indigenous curricula into the existing systems of education, they might have carved out a curriculum

more useful to their society than fighting to maintain sacrosanct what they inherited from the colonialists. Unfortunately, they had learned to love foreign things more than their own. Colonialism deprived them of pride in what was theirs and taught them to appreciate what was European. As Satre (2005) declared, colonialism denies human rights to people it has subjugated by violence, and whom it keeps in poverty and ignorance by force. It keeps them in a state of “sub-humanity.” Such is one of the major reasons for the underdevelopment in Cameroon and most of Africa. The following paragraph shows how English and French subsystems functioned.

### **Francophone and Anglophone subsystems of education**

As indicated above, Cameroon practices two subsystems of education inherited from the British and the French (Tambo, 1985). Out of its ten regions only two: the North West and South West regions are populated mostly by English-speaking citizens and are therefore referred to as Anglophones, practicing the English system of education. The rest of the eight regions are dominated by French-speaking citizens and they practice the French system of education. Although both systems are referred to here as the English and the French systems it is sad to note that both of these countries had long developed new curricula to meet the developmental changes in their approach to education. However, in Cameroon, Anglophones and Francophones are still holding on strongly to their heritage. In a paper by Tchombe (n.d), she laments the fact that although education is a tool for development, Cameroon schools and Universities continue to respond more and more to colonialism rather than to a growth in context. This continuous response of

schools to imperialism questions the very basis of educational structures to address national needs. Cameroon must rework its curriculum to reflect its needs and resources. It must target an education that is true, meaning one that taps into the fabric of their society, cultures, customs and traditions and which they naturally recognize and can be creative about. Only then will the young Cameroonians be able to think critically and creatively. In education building on intrinsic knowledge and past experiences is very important if learning must bring lasting change. Maintaining a curriculum that had colonial purposes at its core for fifty years has been, I dare to say, a waste of time and resources.

However, it must be noted that colonialism, neocolonialism and all that characterized it were carefully calculated every step of the way to bring the society to where it is now – neoliberalism. This is the issue of our next chapter.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Neoliberalism**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter one looked at colonialism, highlighting the fact that it never ended but served as the bedrock of neocolonialism. It also highlighted the fact that Africa has continued to suffer the effects of colonialism, perpetuated through colonial machinery, not dismantled at independence, prominent among which is education. Chapter two explored neocolonialism and how it prepared the stage for neoliberalism. In this chapter I explore the origins of neoliberalism, its praxis in Africa particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, and its relation to education and culture. It is important to discuss the functioning of the neoliberal policies here because understanding how they function helps in our understanding of how they affect education.

#### **The origin and spread of neoliberal ideas in the last three decades**

The neoliberal revolution is usually attributed to Thatcher and Reagan (Harvey, 2005; Peter, 1999). Both led the neoliberal attack on “big government” and the bureaucratic welfare state with a new state based on free trade, economic liberalization. They also targeted the abolition of subsidies and tariffs, foreign investment, restructuring the state sector including corporatization and privatization, contracting out, downsizing, destroying trade unions in favor of employment contracts and dismantling the welfare state contracting health, welfare and education. These policies are sometimes referred to as the Washington Consensus or the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), designed to

restructure national economies to the new and dramatic changes in the world economy (Peters, 1999).

Harvey (2005, p. 2) defines neoliberalism as a theory of political economic practices which proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defense, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets.

Looking at it from a practical perspective this means that neoliberalism not only undermines vital economic and political institutions and the notion of public space so central to democracy and individual liberties, but it also has no vocabulary for recognizing anti-democratic forms of power (Giroux, 2008). Giroux goes on to clarify that the state will no longer take responsibility for social needs. Instead, agencies of government will pursue a wide range of deregulations, privatizations and abdicate responsibility to the market and private philanthropy.

Neoliberalism was already practiced among the countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in a very low key while Keynesianism thrived but showed its ugly head at the collapse of Keynesianism in the 1970s. It became a transnational theory with in no boundaries in the 1980s through the imposition of the IMF, World Bank (WB), and World Trade Organization (WTO). Its



main target in the last three decades has been the developing countries especially in Africa and the newly industrialized countries. It has spread its tentacles to engulf especially the financially challenged nations using structural adjustment policies or the Washington Consensus (ibid).

According to Harrison (2010) neoliberalism's fundamental political good is freedom of the individual. It is best secured through a competitive market society and only possible in states that do not interfere in the economy beyond that which is strictly necessary to ensure the second condition. Neoliberalism might be thought of as an academic synonym of more straightforward terms such as marketization or rolling back the state. These are the aspects of the theory that the World Bank and the IMF have applied in their economic development plan for all of Africa and developing countries in other continents.

The incident that made neoliberalism a transnational affair was Volcker's move in 1979 to stop inflation in the US that brought the rest of the world to this mess. He was given charge of the U.S. Federal Reserve in 1979. Volcker according to Hilgers (2012) increased the value of the dollar and this brought about worldwide consequences. The debt of African countries south of the Sahara was amplified and the leverage of creditors was strengthened over debtors. The IMF came to the rescue of the most hit nations on condition that they submit their economic policy to the IMF requirements. Its aim was to modernize and improve economies perceived as backward, stagnant, unbalanced and dysfunctional. African economies were within this range and so became the testing ground for neoliberal policies.

Neoliberalism is a theory that rules the world, but it is only one out of many possibilities that exists. Therefore, it cannot pose as the only answer to the world's problems, needless to say that it has so far proved itself incapable of bringing the preached development to the less developed world. The diversity that exists in the world warrants that there can never be a one-size-fits-all theory that works for all countries and all circumstances. The African mentality and approach to life is communal as Kanu (2006) and many others confirm and different from Western mentality which promotes individualism. Forcing people into a one-size-fits-all situation for convenience, control, dominance and predictability is not the solution to underdevelopment. A close look at these periods of colonialism, neocolonialism and now neoliberalism will reveal the changes and challenges that Africans have faced. The time is up for Africans to become their own agents of change and progress in the African style. Africans need to ask and answer the question "what is development in the African mind? The answer to this question perhaps will bring true independence and progress but the West must stay off of micro-managing Africa.

Neoliberalism has been very harsh on Africans. Its agents never give up in the face of stark failure. History has it that the agents of other ideologies admitted having failed but not the agents of neoliberalism. Harrison (2010) gives the example of nationalists and socialists development projects that failed in Africa south of the Sahara due to the economic slowdown which began in the 1970s and hit its climax in the early 1980s. Both strategies were on experimental basis and their failure led to the introduction of another strategy called neoliberalism. Neoliberalism, unlike the nationalism, was tried, suffered from various shortcomings that generated even worse economic performances but

continued to be implemented in an increasingly virile and encompassing fashion. It never gave up. In the words of Hahn (2008, p.144) “neoliberal policies are being replaced by other neoliberal policies defended in terms of ‘logical’ explanations and positive rhetoric such as ‘voices of the poor’, Poverty Reduction Strategies and ‘participatory’ frameworks.

As earlier stated, Neoliberalism is a new face of colonialism, the worst manifestation of imperialism; a program of Western imposition that began with colonialism as noted by Cooke, (2003). It is an economic development plan not conceived indigenously but it came to Africa from outside (Harrison, 2010) and is implemented through the supervision of its agents, the IMF and the World Bank codified as structural adjustment. Although neoliberalism presents itself as modern and progressive, Hahn (2008) and, Harrison, (2010) indicate that its underlying ideologies and power agendas originate from the political debates of the eighteenth century. Some studies show that its international development agenda has more to do with political and economic interests than with the benevolent pro-poor development it flashes to the world. Neoliberalism is a hegemonic project, which concentrates power and wealth in local and trans-national elite groups around the world by transferring state owned assets to private people and Trans-National Corporations. Noted for its ability to produce global power, Hahn, (2008) and Harrison (2010) argue that it is the West’s effective way of intervening and dominating post-colonial and post-communist countries, declaring the market as the ruling factor in nation states in Africa. Larner (2006:2) observes that “neoliberalism facilitates the governing of individuals from a distance under cover of NGOs and entrepreneurship. This approach renders the governments of the various states obsolete

and they only become visible when they are called upon to manage or undo the irresponsibility of some foreign investors by paying off debts (Harvey, 2005).

Neoliberalism advocates the removal of exchange rate controls which often lead to devaluation of the currency, reduction in public expenditure, increased rates of interest, removal of price controls, deregulation and favors privatization. It gets into private homes through the media, promotes fierce competition, promotes anti-labor legislation, and its activities and policies increases the gap between the rich and the poor the world over, advocating gated communities and introducing surveillance systems ( Harrison, 2010; Hahn, 2008). It is a class project that pushes to extremes the gap between the rich and the poor, and not only that; it creates destitution and dehumanizes the poor. The situation of poverty in most of the African continent is proof of this. In Cameroon, for example, Horta (1999) reports that people (in one part of Cameroon considered by the study) struggle to eat one meal a day consisting of plantains, pepper and palm oil, a very poor meal at that, and physical measurements of school children show that they have lost weight for not having enough to eat. Giroux (2008) gives an apt description of the actions of neoliberalism and its consequences on the developing countries in these words:

Abroad neoliberal global policies have been used to pursue rapacious free-trade agreements and expand western financial and commercial interests through the heavy-handed policies of the World Bank, the World Trade Organizations and the International Monetary Fund in order to manage and transfer resources and wealth from the poor and less developed nations to the richest and most powerful nations-states and the wealthy corporate defenders of capitalism.

Giroux (2008) further describes neoliberalism as a system that draws upon the rituals of everyday life in order to legitimate its norms, values, institutions and social practices. It is a system of cruelty that wages a relentless attack on democracy, public institutions, public goods and non-commodified values and propagates the market as the organizing principle for all social, political and economic decisions. Chomsky, (2012) supports this idea. The World Bank and the IMF in the process of their implementation of neoliberal policies in the developed world not only address them in the most derogatory terms as “Highly Indebted Poor Countries” (HIPC) but imposes restrictions that favor the existence of capitalist values, undermining substantive democracy (Giroux, 2008). The results have been disastrous. Much will be said about this later. For now it suffices to define this policy and to follow up with how it is implemented in Cameroon and most of Africa.

### **Implementation of neoliberal policies in Sub-Saharan Africa**

The implementation of neoliberal policies in Africa has been cruel to say the least. In all the countries where the so-called Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were implemented, millions of people lost their jobs and means of daily sustenance, even as the IMF and the World Bank held tight to their theory. Colonialism had set the stage for these two bodies to be able to enforce neoliberal policies on Africa. The partition of Africa and its consequent compartmentalization into states at independence in the 1960's planted the seed of division among Africans. This was done through ideological control, ethnic “divide and rule” strategies, land acquisition, racism, labor control, political continuities from past to present with unreformed state structures, and the maintenance of

international and cultural relations with colonial powers. Piecemeal imposition of Western culture through the hegemonic imposition of the European languages in all Africa and especially alliances involving compradorism were all in alignment with what would serve as fertile grounds for recolonization (Harrison, 2010; Bond & Dor, 2003). Such compartmentalization was done not for the good of the Africans but to the advantage of the colonizer to whom the newly created African nations still owe allegiance today. According to the agreements arrived at during the pre-independence period, the newly independent states were to trade in raw materials only with the countries that had colonized them, thus keeping the former colonies still under their grip (Bell, 1986).

The stage was set for dependence on the West and it is a known fact that none of the African countries that dared to act differently, that is, shedding off dependence and subordination to Western states lives peacefully today. In fact, they are all suffering from instability, civil unrest and mass violence (Harrison, 2010). Those that are not experiencing the violence of civil unrest or war are those that have remained loyal and subordinate to control from the West. (the fact that countries like Ethiopia and Liberia, which in the literary sense of the word were not colonized but have been living in turmoil in the past decades is a topic for another thesis). The West maintains their control through different forms of aid and as a matter of fact, aid that is tied. The hook is displayed through discourses of intervention, monitoring and diplomacy institutionalized through the Paris Club donor meetings, various consensus agreements like the Washington consensus, G8 annual summits (Harrison, 2010) and most recently the Continental Africa Chamber of Commerce, USA (CACC) meant to expose the riches of the continent so as

to attract possibilities of trade with USA. Although this looks like an initiative from the continent of Africa since 1969, there is no doubt that the US will be there as providers of technical know-how to the disadvantage of the Africans.

### **Neoliberalism as recolonization of Africa**

Structural Adjustment Programs are a big tool of recolonization in the hands of the World Bank and the International Monetary fund. Enforcing it on African nations surmises to a renewed form of control not only by a colonizing country but by a number of Western countries partaking in the colonization of a country at the same time. Each according to the need of their corporations will benefit from the resources in the colonized nation. The surest means for this to take place is through the policy of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

In Cameroon the re-launch of colonial pursuits has been drastic and devastating especially because the foreign corporations are ecologically and inhumanly insensitive. A good example of this is the Chad-Cameroon pipeline. World Bank approved the construction of this pipeline against the wishes of the environmentalists, the NGOs and human right organizations who requested a moratorium for two years. Although Exxon/Mobil reports that about 13,000 jobs have been created, it seems to record nothing of the harmful environmental effects this construction has cost to humanity and to the natural habitats along this pipeline. As mentioned earlier, foreign capital investment is for the interest and benefit of the investors and not of the country in which the investment takes place. As reported on the Columbia.edu research webpage, Exxon/Mobil known in this

business as Esso has a 40% shares, Petronas Malaysia has 35%, Chevron has 25% while Chad and Cameroon have a 3% share given as a loan from the World Bank. In this case one can conclude that the greater benefit of profits goes to these corporations and not to the already impoverished people of Chad and Cameroon. What if Chad and Cameroon had developed their own technology to extract this oil from their territories and prepare it for export? What if the World Bank instead of limiting Chad and Cameroon to a funding envelop provided under the fund for the poorest countries allowed them the freedom to borrow from the richer IBRD branch of the World Bank at an interest to buy bigger shares of the oil given the profitable nature of the business? Why were they limited to only 3%? That would have led to real development. For more information check here (Raeburn, 2001). In all truth the investment of foreign capital is used for the exploitation of the less developed rather than for the promotion of their development. The particular role of the IMF and the World Bank presented as indispensable is the arbitration of services for disputes concerning foreign investment which are largely in favor of capital rather than the states, hence promoting the institutionalization of capital friendly regulations. Knowing this trick Chossudovsky (1998, p. 63) warns that “Structural Adjustment constitutes a means for taking over the real assets of the indebted countries through privatization programs as well as collecting debt service obligations. His idea is confirmed by the fact that the WB and IMF through the FDI have pressured the Western states to request for privatization of public utilities as well as state owned enterprises by setting up international tenders and requesting transfer of ownership. One cannot deny the fact that the privatization of companies like the CAMTEL has drastically linked Cameroon with the rest of the world by easing communication but at the same time it is



important to find out how much supposed income is lost to the foreign company? The transactions of FDI very often are opaque and involve a lot of bribery and low pricing between the governments of Africa and the West. Cameroonians, for example were eligible to buy enterprises like SODECOTON and CDC even at higher prices than some Western corporations but due to lack of trust, jealousy, envy and fear of a bourgeoisie influence, they were not given the chance (Harrison, 2010; Konings, 2011). Imperialism, the means by which powerful countries and groups extend their power and increase their wealth by bringing ever more of the world under their domination is alive and well. It only changed face. Every new move leaves ever stronger, visible and more demoralizing effects of imperialism on Africa (Harrison, 2010). Continuous imposition of Western ways of civilization upon Africa irrespective of its culture, class and gender or existing forms of power remains a devastating experience. Bell (1986 p.102) states emphatically “

Twenty (fifty now) years after independence it is apparent that Europe is still present and influential in the African continent. European- African relations combine elements of continuity and change. Fundamentally the point at issue is the extent to which the colonial economic and social structures have been transformed or conserved since independence”

With continuous dependence on Europe, Africa lacks the space to think for itself. Rather it strives to think like Europe and the US. How were these new nations to survive in Africa, while living a western mentality and pretending to practice a Western economy of capitalism introduced during the years of colonialism? Would it be real to trade with Europe only as primary producers and experience any economic growth and creativity? Trading with Europe meant becoming a market for their finished products. Bell (1986),

points out that the Lome Convention (the economic development and trade agreements between Europe and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries) brought about this shift to primary production, which was quite visible in the early 1970s. It was a new shift in sectoral emphasis and Lome II (the revised version of the Lome Convention) reaffirmed this shift to rural development and increased food production. The World Bank report of 1979:61 notes that the consequence of all the Lome Agreements for developing countries is abandoning the process to industrial production.

Abandoning such processes is abandoning the part of the educational curriculum that leads to development. Take for example the production of local farm tools from iron. Consistent production would have led to improvement in quality and quantity. But Lome II intensified the need for them concentrating on products like coffee, cocoa and tea etc., therefore, keeping these newly created nations as primary producers to the advantage of the European powers. Besides food production for daily consumption was jeopardized and although much of the continent is fertile, most of the continent imports foodstuff like rice from the West. Such manipulation has continued today in advanced ways: encouraging privatization of education, using an irrelevant curriculum and emphasizing the importance of test scores. These, as Rodney (1982) describes is how Europe (and the US) kept Africa underdeveloped. It is in such an atmosphere that the IMF and the World Bank are able to continue with imperial policies of the West. Africa's natural growth process from the Stone Age to the metal age and to the industrialized age was broken and has never been given the chance to pick up again. Africa has remained consumers of Western ideas of civilization, culture and education and has been helped to shun what is theirs in the process, regarding it as inferior. Consumerist ideas have inundated Africa

and at this moment it seems that everyone reasons in the direction of the market to the detriment of human life which is so much upheld by African cultures in general.

Harrison (2010) divides the three decades of active neoliberalism into two, following the experience of the IMF and the World Bank. The first phase was purposefully meant to initiate and drill in the ideas of neoliberalism and the second phase is the perfection of the ideas and theories. In the light of Harrison's idea, Hahn (2006) observes that:

Neoliberal thinking has become hegemonic and created a 'new normalcy' and 'common sense' among capitalist dominated societies and countries. Failed neoliberal policies are being replaced by other neoliberal policies defended in terms of 'logical' explanations and positive rhetoric such as 'voices of the poor', Poverty Reduction Strategies and 'participatory' frameworks.

Neoliberalism has come to stay considering the fact that its ways of operation are already engraved in the people. But the way it has been practiced is a failed ideology confirmed even by its founders. Hayek recognizes that the state had to maintain some control. Even the World Bank and the IMF have come to admit that it is all a failure (Hilgars, 2012) but they would not relent and when they do, they just change the name and maintain their principles. For example when the SAPs failed, they introduced the PRSPs, which in practical terms boiled down to the same thing.

## **Neoliberalism and Education**

Education is an important instrument of change. Propagators of neoliberal ideas understand this and have particular eye on education, public opinion and knowledge producing institutions, like schools and mass media, because they understand the central position that pedagogy occupies in politics (Saltman, 2006). For them everything functions best as a commodity that is why education has been included in their scheme of privatization. The state no longer has the duty to subsidize education, health or infrastructure. While the state withdraws all subsidies to education, neoliberals use the great mechanism of privatization to bring education under their control. As the state's role in education declines that of the for-profit and non-profit education is taking over. Bacchus quoting David Smith says that neoliberal control on education demands for the alignment of curriculum with the new global economy. It is needless to state the devastating effects this has on the developing countries which are in bad need of education for their population. According to Compton and Weiner (2008) education has been made into a commodity and as such the entrepreneurs, who set up schools, determine what is taught and how it is taught in order to make profit. Determining the curriculum and deciding who to employ to teach is equivalent to hijacking the educational system and replacing it with neoliberal ideals. It amounts to dismantling the welfare state completely. In such an atmosphere Giroux (2008) points out that in neoliberalism's market driven discourse, corporate power takes over and instills a new kind of pedagogy with production, dissemination and circulation of ideas emerging from the educational force of the larger culture. Public pedagogy refers to a powerful ensemble of ideological and institutional forces whose aim is to produce competitive, self-

interested individuals vying for their own material and ideological gains rather than public gains. Education is then commercialized and corporate intervention encouraged, thus allowing for the adoption of business models in the management of education (Kuehn, 2008). Such pedagogy will have no space for gender, class and racial justices. In the neoliberal sphere, school is no longer considered a public good. Politicians and powerful world leaders are not out to ensure that children are educated but expect that schools and universities be marketized so that they can take advantage of this situation. Such an approach to education compromises the role of the teacher who instead of being the architect in the job becomes a mere deliverer of other people's mail, in the form of developed curricula. In this system the teachers are not expected to question the sources, purposes and relevance of these ideological materials but are expected to concern themselves with effective technical skills of delivery (Kanu, 2006).

Even though the WB believes that education is the most important key to poverty alleviation and development and that this can be achieved by universal primary education for all, its approach to how education should be managed is questionable. What goes on practically in the different nations of Africa is sympathetic. Kuehn (2008) holds that economic and political forces keep pushing to flatten the world of education in innumerable ways; one of such ways is making and approving education policies that are aimed at achieving global economic competitiveness and imposing privatization of education as the solution. How can global economic competitiveness be possible and effective if the World Bank stresses only universal primary education and leaves tertiary education to those who can afford to pay for it? Economic development requires researchers, a level that cannot be accomplished by primary school leavers. It needs

engineers, agronomists, doctors at all levels and spheres, all of which can only come from tertiary education. Therefore, the World Bank needs to revisit its theory about education and economic development if it is meant to benefit everybody and every country. If the theory remains as stipulated, it can be concluded that only the rich will benefit and to be more specific only the rich and educated nations of the world will benefit from this theory. Africa and the less developed world will continue to be dependent and available to the powerful nations for continuous exploitation as has been the past.

Higher education faced serious challenges since neoliberal ideologues held that there should be no state financing of higher education. Konings (2011) reports that students in the University of Yaounde-Cameroon protested for against the abolition of subsidies and a number of other reasons which include: lack of basic infrastructure to accommodate the growing number of students enrolled, (the number had risen from 35 in 1961 to 41,000 in 1992), the deteriorating standards of education, the deteriorating living and study conditions and the increasing withdrawal of state support. The students also protested violently against the idea of tuition and fees resulting in a number of students losing their lives. Another issue that affected the life and study of the students was the lack of separation between politics and academics. Appointments in the university were not based on academics but on political affiliations. Loyalty to the ruling regime was enough to earn one a post of responsibility even without the right talents to carry out the functions demanded by the position. (At some point it became more a tribal problem between the Anglophone/Bamileke students versus the Beti students). The imposition of SAPs and the severe economic crisis made conditions worse. It opened up another phase of struggle among the students. The government of Cameroon's second president, Paul

Biya, made situations worse by appointing lecturers as leaders of their political campaigns. Hostility grew among students and national security agents clad as students spied on them. Student administration was no longer the choice of students but they were simply appointed and imposed from above. The students did not succumb to this easily. They fought back and finally were able to gain their voice for free expression. In fact as Konings (2011) points out they played a very important role in the transition to a multiparty system in Cameroon.

The university experienced more cuts in the budget. Finally it was declared that students should pay a tuition of 50,000frs CFA (about \$100) per year and other levies. Disgruntlement reigned everywhere in and out of the university campus. However, it brought a new realization to many of the university students as they learnt that they were truly instruments of progressive change. With time, students especially Anglophone students, a minority group stood up for their rights. Konings (2011) reports that under the leadership of Benjamin Senfo Tonkam a letter was addressed to the head of state declaring that higher education in Cameroon was sick and without repairs, characterized by inadequate infrastructures, anachronism and arbitrariness. Although the introduction of SAPs led to the deterioration of the economic life and consequently other aspects of life in the country, new lessons had been learnt.

The protest of the students had been fruitful. Some of their requests were granted. For example their strikes led to the opening of state universities in other parts of the country like Buea, Ngoundere and Douala. The university in Buea was a particularly welcome idea because it embraced the Anglo-Saxon system of education thus creating space for the Anglophone students to study in a language they were at least comfortable

with. This partly solved the problem of accommodation in Yaounde. Students also learnt practical skills in working together as a group to make their voices heard. In fact without the student's protest the few changes effected might never have happened so soon.

Meanwhile the World Bank and the IMF encouraged the creation of private universities. A number of privately owned universities were opened in Bamenda and other regions of the country. Johnstone et al (1998), remarks that underlying the market orientation of tertiary education is the ascendance, almost worldwide, of market capitalism and the principles of neoliberal economics. Such has been the case in Cameroon. To have a comprehensive view of the situation of education in Cameroon, it is good to take a look at its economic situation before and after the implementation of the SAPs.

### **Implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program in Cameroon**

As was noted, the sudden and steep decline in the prices of Africa's agricultural products caused a grave imbalance in the international market and left the continent languishing in huge debts. It was a blow to the newly independent countries in the continent that had started off with a very promising economy supplying the industrialized world with raw materials for their industries. Unable to pay off its debts of \$785 billion, the IMF and the World Bank stepped in to help the situation. The World Bank and the IMF instituted the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) in 1996. Countries had to gain eligibility over a period of three years by implementing the IMF imposed reforms. A further three years was required making a total of six years before a country



would be granted forgiveness of its multilateral debt. Among the eighteen African countries that fell under this poverty line there was a lot of hesitation to accept these reforms due to what one may call the structural adjustment hangover. Cameroon was one of them. Cameroon enjoyed a steady economic growth, buoyed by the petroleum industry until the petroleum industry experienced a decline in the terms of trade coupled with the already existing decline in agricultural exports. The situation was made worse by the fact that exports exchange currency was the American dollar whose exchange rate had dropped by 40% in the June of 1985. The continuous decline of agricultural products revenue as well as oil revenue did not make the situation any better. The deficit rose from 103.9 billion or 2.3% GDP in 1985/6 to 413.2 billion or 8.7% GDP. Cameroon had to do something (Tchoungui et al, 1995).

The first step was to cut public expenditure in 1987. It was hoped that such a move will ease out the situation if export prices improved, but the fall in prices was persistent and continued to frustrate any effort to arrest or reverse the falling economic and financial standards. Foreign debts skyrocketed with no apparent means to neither pay off the debt nor improve the situation at home. Left with no other choice, the Cameroon government had to accept the IMF offer of structural adjustment in Sept 1988, renewed in November 1991 and March 1994. In 1989 and again in 1994, Cameroon received loans from the World Bank as well. The government of Cameroon decided to undertake a series of reform programs: in September 1988, November 1991 and March 1994 with the IMF, and in 1989 and 1994 with the World Bank (Tchoungui et al, 1995). Did it fully understand the implications of taking loans from the IMF? Even if it did not, it was impossible to secure loans from other lenders as the World Bank had restricted all

lending that required future payment to be carried out through the IMF/WB (Mohan, 2009).

Cameroon reached the depths of its economic vulnerability. It was more or less the same situation for all the sub-Sahara countries. It was no longer possible to maintain payment of its debts to the World Bank and IMF. As Harrison (2010) unlike Brazil and Mexico where all the Bretton Woods institutions, the American government and other institutions worked hard at rescheduling payment, opening new lines of credit or worked to maintain currency stability, only the IMF and the World Bank were given the autonomy to implement economic conditionalities on these distressed economies in Africa. The World Bank, the IMF and the African Development Bank managed the process of qualifying countries for debt cancellation, after which it worked with other lenders like the Paris Club and the London Club of bilateral donors to secure cancellation of debts owed to them as well, in addition to helping poor countries battle off lawsuits against them by other predatory lenders. For the U S Treasury, banks, investors, financial journalists and others, the economic meltdown in Africa was a non-event (Harrison, 2010). The reasons for this neglect are, firstly, that these economies are of marginal importance to the core regions of global capitalism. Secondly, the international system is bent on maintaining an uneven development as it continues to propagate or force Africa into a state of dependency and servitude to the west. The global south is suffocating from the unequal terms of trade and political interference in their state affairs (Mohan, 2009). To succeed in this policy the international powers cannot allow the African economies to be independent. The structural adjustment policy is the new form of control, based on neoliberal assumptions which are the product of the capitalist society.

According to neoliberal policies or structural adjustments, the Highly Indebted Poor Countries' initiative (HIPC), countries whose huge debt has been forgiven by the IMF and World Bank are supposed to remove trade tariffs, devalue the currency, reduce money supply as well as public expenditure, increase rates of interest, remove price control and public marketing institutions and have a plan to open the economy more fully to FDI and increase privatization of public services. These values are based on the belief that free markets can deliver the best route to prosperity and development, therefore it is important that the state or government does not interfere by imposing any form of control over the market as in the Keynesian theory. Keynesianism recognized the role of the state to balance out economic cycles while protecting the marginalized and unlike it, neoliberalism believes in the trickle-down theory which states that unfettered economies can generate growth which will eventually trickle down to the poor but what if they do not survive the harshness till something will trickle down and what if it never trickles? Structural adjustment is based on many assumptions that never really happen (Mohan, 2009; Harrison, 2005). The implement of the SAPs by many African countries has been led to increased poverty and a greater level of unequal distribution of income. It has also led to reduced government funding for public education programs and lower personal income and family budgets available for education.

### **Privatization in Cameroon**

Privatization has been a very useful tool of neoliberalism. Harvey (2009) notes that neoliberals are particularly assiduous in seeking privatization of assets maintaining that the absence of clear private property rights is the greatest of institutional barriers to

economic development and the improvement of human welfare. Through privatization, state owned resources and services are handed over to private companies and are deregulated or freed from state control and intervention. When privatization and deregulation combine with competition, bureaucratic red tape is eliminated, there is increased efficiency and productivity, there is improvement in quality, cost are reduced through cheaper commodities and services as well as the reduction of the tax burden (Harvey, 2005).

In such an economy individuals are blamed for failure and there is no consideration of the fact that the system was set up for some individuals to be excluded resulting in failure. In a neoliberal state everything is privatized from agricultural land, airwaves, water sources, energy sources, health care, banking, indigenous knowledge, plant seeds, to ideas and education. Privatization of any services increases corporate power, and corporate power, follows global restructuring in which the economy is separated from politics and is freed from the control of the nation states (Giroux, 2009). Competition between individuals, corporations, states and regions is the life wire of neoliberalism. Failure is registered by those who do not observe the rules of the games and it is right to eliminate them and in the words of Giroux (2009:65) “those who do not succeed are viewed either as failures or as utterly expendable”.

Cameroon has been no stranger to the above experience. By 1986, as the country's facts sheet indicates, the Cameroon economy had deteriorated so much taking a sharp decline in budgetary revenues that the government, which had resisted IMF and WB offers was forced to turn to the these Bretton Woods organizations for assistance. It

launched an economic program following the neoliberal theories of privatization with a focus on restructuring public enterprises. Privatization, which Makwana (2006) defines as the transfer of ownership or control over the production and distribution of state-owned resources or services to private companies came into effect in Cameroon. It opened up for corporations a seemingly endless array of profitable opportunities. At the moment in Cameroon there is a lot of land grabbing by corporations, for example Herackles Farms in Ndian Division. Arguing against industrial farming in Ndian Division in Cameroon, Bitchoka (2013) states that the industrial oil palm plantation will encroach on the land of the people and adversely affect their livelihoods and food security; besides many will not be left out in the compensation plans. Food production will be reduced leading to increased dependence on imported food. New corporations have sprung up in Cameroon like that of Alhadji Baba Danpullo, and joined foreign corporations in depriving the people of their farm land meanwhile using it for industrial production.

Corporations are not only interested in grabbing land. There is a high scramble for the acquisition of airwaves, water sources, energy sources, healthcare, banking, indigenous knowledge, plants, seeds and even ideas are now increasingly controlled and supplied by corporations for profit (ibid, 2006). Since neoliberalism strives on privatization of resources and promotes the interest of the rich, mainly the corporations, who already have the means, the IMF and WB invites them once the nations in question have accepted their policy. In 1986, following the sharp economic decline in Cameroon almost all the state owned resources and services were put on the privatization list ready to be sold to foreign corporations. The state launched an economic reform program with

special emphasis on the restructuring of public enterprises. The Cameroon Fact Sheet has much more details of privatization in Cameroon worth quoting here:

*This rehabilitation program, based on an in-depth analysis of 75 public enterprises, resulted in a new classification of the public enterprises into two groups: 59 enterprises outside the financial sector to be liquidated and 120 enterprises to remain state-owned, including 25 priority enterprises to be rehabilitated under performance contracts. In addition, in 1990, the Government issued a decree listing 15 enterprises to be privatized. Between 1990 and 1994, out of those 15 enterprises, 5 were sold (one of them only partially), 3 were liquidated, 5 divestitures were unsuccessful and 2 enterprises were withdrawn from the list to be privatized. ... In January 1994, the Government revised its economic reform strategy to focus on privatization, instead of rehabilitation, as part of its overall objective to further liberalize the economy. A list of 15 additional enterprises to be privatized was published in July 14, 1994. In June 1995, the decision was made to accelerate the privatization program and to expand its scope by including the main public utilities, i.e., water, electricity, (health, education) and telecommunications. Between 1997 and 2000, Cameroon had largely rehabilitated and privatized its domestic banking system as part of its larger scale privatization program. Privatization in Cameroon began in the late 1980s under pressure from international multilateral institutions and has continued since then at a slow and erratic pace, often falling behind schedule (Country Fact Sheet n.d.).*

As a result of this privatization the country was thrown into a very unbalanced and unstable situation. Many people went unemployed, families could not take care of their health needs nor were they able to keep their children in schools, especially in private schools. As noted above among all the public services privatized were health care, agriculture and education. These are very basic needs of every country and putting them in private hands means these services will not be subsidized making it impossible for people to be able to afford them. The IMF and WB make statements about Cameroon like “Cameroon is richly endowed in natural resources (Konings, 2011)... But since the 1980s it has been hit hard by the economic crisis” – needless to say the situation has been made

worse by the IMF and the World Bank's imposed structural adjustment programs and the devaluation of the CFA franc (Marcon International Inc., 2013).

The most recent FACT SHEET of Cameroon states that the World Bank currently has an active project in Cameroon that promotes privatization of the Public/Private Partnership, Growth and Poverty Reduction Project. According to a country's newspaper called "Nation Master .com", the IMF is pressing for more reforms, including increased budget transparency, privatization, and poverty reduction programs. Weak prices for oil and cocoa led to the significant slowdown in growth in 2009. The government was under pressure to reduce its budget deficit, which by the government's own forecast would hit 2.8% of GDP (Development Assistance Committee, 2002). The laying off of workers and closing scrapping off of some parastatals all led to a drop in employment. The consequences of unemployment have been very harsh on the area of health, general welfare and education. Parents who are the sole bread winners of the family have had to withdraw their children from schools because they do not have enough to put food on the table let alone pay school fees. Many young people are roaming the streets looking for petty jobs to do, (which often do not exist) for money just enough to buy bread for the day. Many are sick and dying from common ailments as well as HIV/AIDS and classrooms are not filled to capacity in a country in dire need of education.

### **Cameroon's statement on education**

Meanwhile in the preamble of the Cameroon constitution it is written:

The State shall guarantee the child's right to education. Primary education shall be compulsory. The organization and supervision of education at all levels shall be

the bounden duty of the State” (Global Campaign for education for action aid, 2008).

The state of Cameroon has not observed its constitution because it has not enforced compulsory elementary education thus allowing its citizens to be illiterates. Instead a number of public primary schools have been created as a reward for casting a vote to notable politicians into the ruling party. However not all the young people attend school. The state has to live up to the constitution. Politicians who have vied to have schools opened in their home environments (usually in conformity with their campaign promises) have to assure that these schools have appropriate infrastructure and qualified teacher.

In the year 2000, the government declared free primary education for all (Hadidja, 2011). Private and confessional schools were not part of this. Unfortunately, this declaration lasted only two years. Even then, it did not enforce compulsory elementary education for all children of school going age. The government found it financially challenging to sustain a complete free education. The parents were back to paying fees and tuition. In fact, declaring free education did not make much difference to the parents because they still had bear a lot of costs like buying books and uniforms for their children. In some cases, they had to pay building fees since many new schools were declared functional without buildings. The burden of erecting a school building was, therefore, the responsibility of the enthusiastic Parent Teacher Association members imposed a fee called ‘building fee. This money was used for the construction of the school and for other school supplies like benches. Books and uniforms were excluded from benefiting from such funding. For those who sent their children to private schools,



they did not only pay uniform and book fees but also paid a high tuition. Unfortunately only a handful of parents can do this.

Education professor James Tooley carried out a research in some African countries from which he concluded that parents do not want government schools, because teachers do not turn up or, if they do, they do not teach. He encouraged donors to lend their money to private entrepreneurs. A BBC report (BBC, 2006) on the question “Do you prefer private schools?” got a series of answers from a number of African parents living in Europe and America. Samuel a Nigerian who lives in Boston USA, whose statements could have been coming from the mouth of Cameroonian parents, has this to say about private education:

Parents want their children to have the best education. The problem with countries like Nigeria is that the best education these days is only available in private institutions. ....I however do not believe that the solution necessarily lies in increasing the number of private schools, but in fixing the problem with our public institutions. We need to start setting up stable public structures that work, because we just do not have the resources to rely on private enterprise.

One of the solutions to the problem with public schools does not lie in creating more private schools. Tooley seems to think that because affordable private schools are found in alleyways in many poor countries, it should be the way to go. Such a mentality falls short of what is commendable for any society. Every child as is stated in the preamble of the Cameroon constitution has a right to education. Even without stating it, this education should be one that is commendable, accessible, with all the infrastructure and requirements necessary for a good education. I wonder if Tooley would for any reason send any of his children to such a school. Why would he advocate privatization of schools on the basis that people are already practicing it in such a poor manner? Or does he think that just because exists in this way it should be

taken to another level? As Samuel in the same news page says the state has to be called to live up to its responsibilities toward its citizens and no one should condone with such insufficiencies.

A Cameroonian Enyabe Ndone who lives in South Korea, responding to the same question on BBC News says:

Government schools or call them public schools have become a sham in Cameroon. Teachers in Government run schools take up classes in private schools where they concentrate more than in the schools where they are assigned. In most of Cameroon, government school teachers even team-up and run private schools in the city. It is customary to see the names of prominent government schools teachers appear on the adverts of many private schools with some even calling them full time teachers. The problem of the neglect of teachers compounded by poor salaries has driven most of them to this direction. The government is concern on buying arms rather than focusing on alleviating poverty through education. The corruption web in Cameroon has entangled everyone from the presidency to the classroom teacher. That's why even Government officers have reverted to mission private schools for quality education, which are most often very expensive for the poor man.

Enyabe raises a salient reason here as to why the situation in the public schools is what it is. Teachers are not well treated. Their salaries are meager and perhaps not enough to take care of their family responsibilities. This is an issue the Cameroon government has to fix and restore the pride of public schooling especially for the sake of the poor. Emphasizing the successes of private schools as opposed to public schools is just a scheme to promote more privatization, a target to limit education to a limited few who will in the long run continue to treat the uneducated as slaves and fools, just as the Western world does today toward the developing countries.

## **Education for Development in Cameroon -Africa**

The role of quality education in the development of every country cannot be learnt how important education is and they are ready to work tooth and nail to make sure that their children go to school, obtain the best education, earn a certificate and find a job that will bring improvement to the whole family. With the current crisis situation in Cameroon the IMF and the WB imposed structural adjustment on all aspects of life including education. Fan and Rao (2003) confirm that the richness of a country can be determined by the amount it spends on education. Following the results of the structural adjustments of education in Africa, they indicate that education has suffered from the structural adjustment programs with the coefficient of the adjustment program invariably negative and statistically significant in Africa as well as in Asia. Therefore the negative coefficient obtained for Africa and Asia is an indication that the structural adjustment has been very destructive on them and did not yield only good results.

Yet the number of world conferences and summits held with emphasis on the right of everyone to education and the goal of promoting education around the world and most especially in Africa, within the last five decades, reveals the importance of education to the development of every country. The world conference held in Jomtien, Thailand and the world education forum held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, exactly two decades apart, spoke the same language. These, reaffirmed the fact that education is a human right that needs to be protected and extended. One hundred and sixty four countries of the world set ambitious goals on education to be achieved by the year 2015. They considered that education is a means to wider ends: that education leads to a reduction in poverty, improvement in public health, creates more room for equal opportunities, promotes social justice and reduces social disparities. Captions such as “education is a basic right and a requirement for national development”, or “education is a fundamental human right and

essential for the exercise of all other human rights, or education promotes individual freedom and empowerment and yields important development benefits,” or everyone has the right to education—which should be available, and free to all at least at the primary level, or education is indispensable in realizing other human rights’ abound in organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, OXFAM, Amnesty International, the UN and many others, indicating that education is an exceedingly valuable asset for progress in any country or nation. However, it is unimaginable and unthinkable that among the items of the Washington Consensus for which public funds should not be used and enforced by the IMF and the WB is education. How then can education have a focus if it is not the state that sets the pace for its citizens?

It should be underlined that the issue here is not only education but quality education. Quality education strengthens economic growth and efficiency in a country and all these lead to equitable patterns of globalization (Efagmr, 2009). In a joint production of United Way: the American Development project (2008) carried out a research and they, too, highlight the fact that education benefits everyone in the country, not only for the jobs and wages it brings. Educational attainment is also linked to health, life expectancy, voter turnout, incarceration, self-worth and dignity and a promising future for one’s children.

Efagmr (2009) argues further that failure in the educational system weakens the real economy, its productivity and growth, and a poor economy consequently leads to high child and maternal mortality rate, poor health and loss of life. These inevitably call for a poor social life and a weak democracy. For education goals to be achieved, education has to be planted at the heart of the political agenda, an indication that good leaders are inevitable for a good education.

In spite of all the above studies and conclusions about the usefulness of education there are still wide gaps of global inequalities in education as is reflected in the world economies today.

The US and Europe maintain a high level of development because of their high standards of education with compulsory state sponsored primary education for all (EFA global monitoring report, 2003/4). In fact, there is no debate about education being a major step to social, financial and economic development. Schweke (2004) found out that a compelling body of research links primary and secondary education to economic development and growth. People, he says, are an economic asset “human capital” therefore increased investment in their health, skills and knowledge provides future returns to the economy through increase in labor productivity. Education increases workers’ average earnings and productivity; it reduces incidences of social problems such as drug abuse, crime, welfare dependency and lack of access to medical care, all of which weigh heavily on the economy. Observations such as these help clarify why whole nations would spend precious time and money to discuss and promote education round the world. Even the World Bank report of 1993 reveals the truth about the effectiveness of education as an asset of development. The report states that Côte d'Ivoire’s educational improvements did the most for child health accounting for 66% of the gains between 1960 and 1980 and contrasts Côte d'Ivoire’s success with Egypt which had only 21% though both started at similar levels except for the fact that adult schooling started at a much lower level in Côte d'Ivoire but increased five times faster than in Egypt. In an earlier study made in 1991, the WB looked at the economies of 68 countries from the five continents between 1960 and 1987 and concluded that increasing the average amount of education of the labor force by one year raised the Gross Domestic Product by 9 %. In this study Singapore stood out as a remarkable example. It changed its curriculum and created one oriented toward industry, clerical and professional manpower and as this program evolved it engaged everyone both skilled and unskilled. It amazingly provided employment for everyone in the society (Geo-Jaja & Mangum, 2003).

Another important aspect to be considered is the quality of education. Quality matters if education is expected to yield the expected results of self-development and economic growth for the country. In most African countries, for example, the government faced with the financial difficulties allow for education for all without emphasizing on quality. In a very recent education overview, the World Bank reveals that even when children complete school, they often do so without acquiring basic skills. This is particularly detrimental in this day and age when unemployment is high and labor markets are demanding more skilled and agile workforces than ever before (World Bank, ; Jerald 2009).

The WB and IMF emphasize on a rising GDP as signs of economic growth and better lifestyle but a rising GDP does not mean that the life style of the people has improved. Instead a close examination reveals that good or quality education leads to an improvement in people's lives. It follows then that quality of education registers a significant growth in GDP

A study made by UNESCO (2005) established the fact that the more highly educated one is the higher one's income, therefore education as a public good must be made available to everyone for the holistic progress of the country. Another path of this same study was carried out a in the US, Canada and the United Kingdom and it showed that educational programs that deliver high skill levels bring higher individual economic benefits than those that do not. It is this connection between education and economic development that encouraged the leaders of the newly independent African nations to engage massively in education even though it was just a continuation of the colonial education. At least they still had the authority to do so. The GDP of nearly all the African nations was positive and their engagement in education supplied the required human resources for modernization. Their good judgment was justified by the fact that not only is education a basic human right but they believed that if education is properly planned

it will facilitate human capital formation and socio economic mobilization. This would not only impact productivity and social human capital but would influence other variables such as fertility rates, increase use of technology, more productivity among workers leading to high standards of living as long as education was tailored to local and national needs vital to nation building (Geo-Jaja & Mangum, 2003).

Despite the recommendable efforts of the newly independent states to promote education for development, much has come in between their effort that is worth discussing here. The World Bank and the IMF have stood at the forefront as saviors of the bad, poor and difficult situation of underdevelopment in most of Africa. What baffles understanding is the fact that the World Bank and the IMF understand and speak about the importance of education but the process of having it implemented is muddled with their intrinsic and selfish desire to promote the theories of neoliberalism dear to the U.S. and Britain. As Saltman (2006) indicates in his paper on “CAII: Corporate Education in Iraq”, it is all about U.S. retention of control of the outcome of education over Iraqi civil society. This piece of truth proclaimed by many other Americans and outsiders, is the secret of all the manipulations going on around the world today especially in mineral rich Africa; the U.S. wants to maintain control not only of education but of every aspect of life. It stands out as the strong promoter of democracy around the world. It is a neoliberal democracy which changes to fit the situation. Saltman (ibid, p. 32) aptly describes it as “capitalist democracy modeled on the privatized and privatizing U.S system”. Neoliberal democracy shift power to private hands instead of to the people even in undeveloped economies and dictates to the private hands what to do. Harvey (2005) was quick to note the volatile nature of neoliberalism. It is a way of having direct control of life in those countries – a confirmation of American imperialism and hegemony. It is not because the U.S. cares about the wellbeing of the

individuals in those countries who may be suffering. Rather it seeks to manipulate everything for its own interest imposing on others the American system of education (Mentan 2009; Saltman 2006). There is need for the developing nations to stand up for the education they desire to see flourish in their countries. But it has to be a tough fight with American imperialism.

Nyamjoh reflecting on the African experience and in line with the above discourse as far as growth and development are concerned has this to say:

One of the important aspects of economic growth and development is investment in human capital, or more simply put investment in education. But education is not just the inculcation of facts as knowledge but a set of values that in turn appraise the knowledge being acquired. When the values are not appropriate for progress, the knowledge acquired is rendered irrelevant and becomes merely cosmetic.

This is the basis of one of the most complex problems with education in Africa. There is a mismatch with the values and the knowledge acquired. As Abdi (2012) asserts, it is an education imposed from outside. Colonialism established an educational system in Africa alien to the philosophies and way of life of the African people, one which is not in line with their experiences, does not represent their real needs and hardly fulfills their practical expectations. Therefore, since the yardstick of development is according to Western generated ideas, models and research paradigms what is African is classified as primitive and to be abolished or abandoned for the civilized European worldview. Colonialism destroyed the African education systems and distorted and disoriented their social development schemes. They failed to recognize that what is African is just different, and is an alternative way of living as Nyamjoh (2004) names it. If economic development is evaluated in terms of neoliberal policies then Africa is far from it and will most likely remain far away until it is viewed differently. The above discourse,



therefore, emphasizes the fact that education is important only if it is relevant to the needs of the people and it will lead to development if it has the right quality.

### **Neoliberalism and culture in Cameroon**

Just as much as colonialism, neocolonialism and neoliberalism it affected the way education was carried out in Africa so, too, did it affect the culture of the people. It had a negative effect on African culture because it relegated it to the side and made caricatures of Africans in their efforts to learn or imitate the colonialists' culture.

Culture has varied definitions with emphasis on different aspects of it. In simple words, culture is a way of life of a people which includes how they see life, the world, and others. It also includes how they celebrate birth or new life, death, marriage, success and life in general. In the African context a lot of importance is placed on community and the role one plays in it. The success of an individual is the success of a village.

Hofstede (1997) has defined culture as the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. It is important to note that culture is dynamic and can be influenced by other cultures. Cultures learn from other cultures. In the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe the appearance of the white man in that community is a novelty. His presence shifts the people's mentality about the world. Their struggle to accommodate him and his religious influence also brings another level of growth and a new way of seeing things. Before long something of both parties gets rubbed off on the other.

Cameroon, for example, was not formerly known as such and it was not always the size it is today. German Kamerun (as it was spelled and known then) was a vast empire, covering parts of present day Nigeria, parts of present day Chad, parts of Gabon, the Central African Republic, Congo Brazzaville and Equatorial Guinea. It was not until 1914 that some of the neighboring countries to present day Cameroon emerge as entities different from Kamerun. Prior to that and, without ever been known as a common territory, it was just a conglomeration of tribes living side by side with each other, respecting each other's ways of seeing life and occasionally or even frequently fighting each other in tribal wars for various reasons. Colonialism opened the window to new cultures. It challenged the people to see things differently. Colonial capitalism saw the introduction of a new culture among the people of Africa. The African tribes lived side by side with no notion of modern nation states as introduced by colonialism. Cameroon as a country with its own set of experiences, beliefs, values, meanings and attitudes has been exposed to a number of European cultures: the Portuguese, the Germans, the English and the French. Something of the cultures of these people in their interactions robbed off on Cameroonians. They too must have learnt something from their relationship with Cameroonians irrespective of the fact that they came in to conquer.

Some dominant cultures have always imagined that minority cultures are primitive. The reverse is sadly also true. The misleading assumption that some cultures are better or more primitive than others led to the disappearance of some very wise traditions from which the whole human race could benefit being pushed to the side. Also the struggle for conquered or minority people to survive has always led to the loss of their identity, their language ignored, customs and traditions downplayed allowed to disappear. Cameroonian culture – if any such thing could be seen as embodying the values of the 250+ tribes that make up the country - had a very important

place for education. The purpose of education was to help the individual to insert himself or herself well in the society. All that was learnt was relevant to life and practical. (See Pre-colonial education in chapter one of this work).

The French had the policy of assimilation so they wanted to wipe out everything Cameroonian in the people they ruled to make them little French citizens (Jua, n.d). They worked hard to imbue their culture on the Cameroonian people. They used schools, work, forced labor, trade and all sorts of ways to assimilate these people. They increasingly looked down on them and treated them in ways that said they were inferior to the Europeans. They made them believe that their culture was primitive and slowly tried to imitate the culture of the Europeans. They learnt their language and went to their schools but often they fell back to their cultural practices because these had meaning for them. Because this did not work as the French planned the people became puppets or hybrids of the French system. It was about same with the English who used the system of “divide and rule”. In this approach they tried to maintain their traditions as their private issues but what had to be recognized was the English man’s way (ibid, n.d). To live as a hybrid is not an easy thing to do because you are never yourself.

However this “in-between” way of being (neither French nor British nor a true African) initiated in the colonial period created a suitable atmosphere for continuous control of the colony even after independence. They continued to depend on the British and the English for direction and never really learnt how to stand on their feet. They were educated but in British and French ways, an education that was meant to enable smooth communication between the colonialists and the indigenes. Maintaining such a curriculum for 50 years means they have never learnt how to be themselves, act from within creatively and to grow to true independence. It is in this light that African educationists like Kano, Abdi, Sefa Dei and many others think that a return to the

wisdom of tradition as far as education is concerned will be a useful process in this age of neoliberalism when the big question is how to develop Africa, how to make Africa truly independent and able to solve its own problems.

Culture is learned. It is imbibed and it imbues one's life from one's early days and it is hard to lose it all. According to Bell (1986) culture mediates all political, economic and social processes. The culture of the people influences their response to changes in the environment. After many years of colonization the African cultures have shifted to embrace many European attitudes but much of the way they see and do things have remained more or less as before colonization. They have continued to practice subsistence farming, their religion and simple life style with a strong communal emphasis. The problem here is that their way of knowing has not been incorporated into the European schooling system preventing creative thinking. And so they continue to depend on the West to solve their problems. This created a very suitable atmosphere for the imposition of the SAPs on Cameroon.

In the age of neoliberalism or market capitalism the people who are struggling to find an identity for themselves are now turned into mere consumers. They are only worthwhile as long as they are buyers and the market forces determine what has to happen to them. In Cameroon the SAPs have brought down purchasing power almost to zero considering that no less than 40 percent of the population lived on less than \$1.25 a day (2007 WB figures). In the language of market economics these people who are not good consumers are no use.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Situation leading to the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Policies in Cameroon**

A number of issues forced Cameroon to accept the Washington consensus. First of all Cameroon is a developing country that depends on primary products such as coffee, cocoa, rubber and petroleum and other food stuff for its exports. Secondly, France one of its leading trade partner, “had been” the colonizer of Cameroon and in a way Cameroon still felt loyal to France while France felt superior to Cameroon and would tell it what to do. Thirdly, because Cameroon had no industries to process the raw materials Cameroon was placed in a very vulnerable situation with balancing of exports and imports since import prices were always double exports prices. The OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) crisis was the climax of this inequality. Among many reasons, the OPEC nations agreed on determining the price for their products. This raised a red flag to the West which feared that they will soon lose control over the developing world. They responded by refusing to import petroleum causing stagnation in the petroleum market which affected the whole economy. Volcker’s who was in charge of the US treasury, as if to impress US hegemony over trade responded with a sharp increase of interest rates which hit the developing countries tremendously (Harvey, 2005; Hilgers 2010). More than thirty countries including Mexico announced that they were not able to honor their payment commitments. This reaction marked the introduction and imposition of the neoliberal order (Dumenil & Levy, 2005) and the IMF and the World Bank took over the rest of the process in the interest of the US. This decision boxed in all the developing nations forcing them to succumb to the neoliberal order. If business was conducted in equal terms, different decisions might have been taken and for the good of all partners. The final decision was to the

advantage of the West and the US and to the disadvantage of the developing countries which were by the decision to raise the price of oil beginning to stand up for their rights.

Fiscal discipline alone already placed Cameroon in a disadvantaged position. With huge debts at high interest rates resulting from the OPEC crisis and Volcker's reaction, austerity measures on public subsidies to very essential necessities like health and education felt like the last stroke to a dying man. Coupled with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, many have died for sheer lack of funds to afford the costly medical treatments and doctor consultations. The results have been that families unable to afford enough food for sustenance withdrew their children from schools. For one or two years with the introduction of Education For All (EFA), user fees were cancelled from schools but such an attempt was short lived as there were not enough finances to cope with it. Although many public schools and teacher training colleges were opened and many children registered in the schools, the dropout rate has been very high and completion rates are very low. Because the quality of education in these schools has fallen so badly, parents who are able to afford prefer to send their children to the private schools where teaching and learning has been shown notably through higher academic performance to be more serious than in the public schools where there is much laissez-faire attitude. These privately owned schools which proliferate the country receive some financial support from the WB but cannot replace public schools which very often are poorly staffed with no infrastructure to accommodate the students. Privatization of education and tuition in public schools makes education available just for a select few and therefore at the moment thousands of school age children are in their homes without any education. Many fill the streets in the commercial areas struggling to sell or to beg for their families. Child labor, a crime once upon a time, has become more widespread and the silence around it seems to confirm that it is either permitted or just uncontrollable.

Carnoy (1995) as well as Reimers & Tiburcio (1993) confirm that austerity measures are good and meant for short periods because their purpose is to correct the functioning of the economy, free it from inflation and not to punish the people. To carry out austerity measures for three decades is deadly for the wellbeing of a nation and its citizens especially if such austerity measures include very basic needs like healthcare, education and nutrition. These are necessities which the state must subsidize for its less fortunate citizens without which the nation will suffer grievously. Many authors have criticized the glaring wickedness and selfishness of the Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF & WB) in the implementation of such harsh and very inhuman measures on the developing nations. Even Williamson (2002) who put together the ten points of the Structural Adjustment Policies expresses surprise at the manner of implementation in the face of the destruction they caused to most nations in Africa. Meanwhile the G8 members take care and make choices of what gets implemented in their countries, protecting their economies and their people from extreme harsh situations as much as possible (Harvey, 2005). What is more, their countries, at least, had a level of development that could support the resulting stress arising from the implementation of neoliberal policies which the developing nations did not have.

The IMF and the WB before its involvement with the developing countries, made sure they gained debt immunity which meant that whether the projects were successful or not, whether they brought development or not the borrowing countries were obliged to pay back what had been invested even in projects in their countries. This was very unlike Keynesianism under which failed projects were considered a failure and the hosting countries did not have to pay or owe any debt. In the neoliberal order, however, the host country is considered responsible for the failure and becomes enchained in the vicious circle of debt. Developing nations are in huge debts without corresponding development. The IMF and the WB continue to pile more debts

irrespective of the continuous failures registered. The lives of the people have become terribly miserable even though the GDP standards have improved. The Cameroon GDP of 2010 was estimated at 3.2 percent, registering a growth of 1.2 percent from the 2009 GDP but an assessment in Cameroon showed that more than 70 percent of fuel price subsidies accrue to the richest 40 percent of households. The poorest 20 percent of households receive less than 1 percent of the subsidy for gasoline. For kerosene only 20 percent of households receive only 13 percent of subsidies. High cost of kerosene means many spend their nights in darkness (www.imf.org, 2011). The West and the U.S. teamed up to name Africa a highly indebted poor continent in order to save it by cancelling the debt but the indebtedness in which African countries find themselves now is unimaginable. According to Mentan (2007) Sub-Saharan Africa between the years 1980-2000 paid more than \$240 billion as debts payments amounting to about four times the amount of debt in 1980, and still owed four times more than what it owed more than a score of years ago. Cameroon's case exemplifies this. It owed less before getting involved with the IMF and the WB and after asking the help of these bodies, its debt doubled. What a contrast. In 1985 Cameroon's debt stood at \$535.0 million dollars. By 1992 it had risen to \$1,080.0m. In 1994 it rose to \$1,259.0m and in 1995 it dropped a little to \$1,129.0m (www.imf.org. 1998).

Even the foreign investors' promises to make Cameroon a better place did not materialize. AES SONEL an American company that supplies Cameroon with electricity has been brought to court in Los Angeles in an American court by Cameroonians for its inefficiency. They pay huge sums for electricity but receive the poorest supply of electricity ever. In fact, it is worse than before (Cameroon Post 2013).



Cameroon was declared a HIPC-eligible country in order to secure debt relief. Today it is five times more steeped in debt than thirty years ago. The GDP shows an increase but that is reflected only in the lives of the rich few, as is characteristic of neoliberal theories. So far the trickledown theory has not worked. An IMF report titled “*IV consultation – staff report*” (IMF, 2011) suspected that there might be social unrest in October because of presidential elections and legislative elections in mid-October 2012, because of the widespread poverty, youth unemployment, increasing income and wealth inequalities. What stands out in the above experience is how power, ideology and hegemony are used by the powers that be to manipulate whole nations. Cameroon and most of Africa are again entangled in a new form of imperialism. The latest approach had been to use tyrants whom the world powers maintained in power, then it went awry because some of those tyrants did not want to obey them, then they shifted to democracy and just when it was introduced, they realized, as it were, that the people will become very powerful, knowing their rights and demanding them. So, they switched to something nameless, fast enough not to make any impressions on the people’s minds. Now the new approach is to do away with the leaders by reducing the role of the state in governance so as to control the developing countries straight from Washington. This is what the Washington Consensus has achieved for the IMF and WB in the last thirty years of its involvement with the developing nations. “Money is power” as the saying goes and it is true. That is what has brought Cameroon into this mess – the lack of money.

### **The Implementation of the SAPs in Cameroon**

Though reluctant, Cameroon finally accepted to place itself under the conditionalities imposed by the IMF and the World Bank on those who needed help. Only on acceptance of those

conditionalities were loans offered. The conditions were implementation of the Structural Adjustment Plans (SAPs). Cameroon implemented the SAPs in stages. According to a report by Tchoungui et al, (1995) in 1986/87 a team was set up to make an assessment of the declining situation with the task of identify the specific programs and actions that the SAPs would address. Top on the list of the SAPs and addressed by Cameroon in the different periods were: (i) reduction in budget deficits through increase in the tax rate, reduction in the wage bill and in subsidies to state-owned enterprises; (ii) restoration of external competitiveness based on the reduction in factors costs; and (iii) restructuring of state-owned enterprises. There was a close look at the environment, specifically the ecological issues, agriculture, forestry and all of this in relation to economic growth - to stabilize public finances and to stimulate the economy. As part of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program, rationalization and reform of the forestry sector was proposed (a hybrid project with the Global Environmental Fund). It was agreed that the CFA franc will be devalued and exports and imports to be maintained in balance. Import taxes were cut and regulation of quantities of imports removed while the prices of exports were cut to a minimum as well. A simplified and liberalized interest rate was introduced, setting of prices for goods on domestic markets was removed and import licenses abolished. The fiscal budget was tightened and extra budgetary expenditures abolished... in theory or on the books. After implementing the SAPS for 21 months the results were disheartening. The economic results were poor. There was an increase in the debt level; there was still a lot of rigidity in the economy and poor success in restoring a competitive spirit. 37 billion was saved mainly from a reduction in government expenditure. It should be noted that this saving is as a result of the huge layoff of workers, meaning that many people are unemployed. The GDP rose by 1.3 percent. Tax revenue 1.5 % fell below expectation because of the “ghost town” in 1991 a period during which

the people refused to pay tax. Therefore the servicing of the debt to the Paris Club and the African Development Bank could not be afforded (ibid, 1995).

This was not an inspiring situation and so it led to the slowdown of other planned activities. Lots of issues political, economic, and social interfered with the SAP plans and it was not always possible to meet the set targets. Salaries were sliced and retirement age reduced, laying off many more people leading to more unemployment. The deficit rose to about 9% of GDP in 1993/94 with no hope of increasing before 1995/6 indicating that more financial help would be needed.

1994 saw another devaluation which led to a decline in purchasing power. The secondary sector also saw a lot of decline due to a weak domestic purchasing power. But towards the end of the year there was some progress. Cotton seed production and fiber rose bringing in some increase of 6% compared to the previous year and exports rose to 27%.

The second phase of the SAP had as its objectives to restore internal and external balances, achieve a 5% growth with low inflation rate of 2% per year, stabilize external accounts and achieve a current account deficit of less than 2.5% of GDP. As with the first program the present one concentrated only in restoring the major macro-economic balances with the hope of enabling Cameroon to resume growth and check the fall in the purchasing power of the population. With a GDP growth of 4.5% annual average the budget deficit was reduced to 0.2% in 1999/00. The inflation rate dropped from 4.2% at the start of the Program down to 2 % in 1999/00. The restructuring and/or privatization program for state-owned enterprises allowed for rehabilitation and liberalization of the productive sector. This led to a reduction of the state's debt burden. On the social front, a significant rise in expenditures in favor of the social sector, prepared the stage for the poverty reduction strategy (OCDC, 2001). Not much discussion has been going on about education but in this second program which comes a decade after the

implementation of the SAPs, the IMF and the WB began to be a little flexible. Education, health and infrastructure started to surface in the discussions. Experience showed that economic development was not an entity of its own. It could not implement itself. It needed human beings with brains to make and implement decisions. These human beings need to be educated to be able to use the new technology and more over they need to be healthy and alive. Sick people are a liability in economic terms.

As far as education is concerned the Overseas Cooperative Development Council (OCDC) (2001) report says that the IMF and the WB made adjustments on the provision of education. According to the report resources were to be developed to facilitate access to schools for the disadvantaged groups, the quality of public schools to be improved upon, measures to be taken to increase enrollment and in order to increase the supply of school textbooks CEPR would no longer maintain the monopoly of supply as from the year 2000. The schools were to be zoned and committees set up for easy management. At the same time steps would be taken to train and employ high quality teachers in secondary schools. All these measures were still to be put into practice. The SAP II implementation was successful and earned for Cameroon promotion to HIPC initiative in October 2000.

SAPs III picked up lots of the projects that were earmarked for changes earlier on but met with lots of difficulties and nothing was done. Application of tax reforms so far has been a failure. The expected revenue increase was not realized as planned. Revenue increase was thanks to oil revenue. No competition with the world market because of lack of funding to ensure the operation of the competitiveness committee.

Privatization had its own hurdles. Cameroon companies or parastatals like SONEL, CDC, CAMRAIL, TELECEL, SOCAPALM, SODOCOTTON, INTEL CAM, CAMSUCO,

CHOCCAM, SOCAMAC, HEVECAM, SEPBCREGIFERCAM, CAMTEL, SONEL, SNEC and CAMAIR just to name a few, were advertised for privatization open to foreign investors. Privatization of these enterprises did not turn out very well. As the SAPs III report indicates, it “turned out to be more complex than initially envisaged and experienced significant delays. According to Konings (2011) much of the complexities arose because the Biya regime was reluctant to sell state-owned enterprises for technical and political reasons. There was a lot of corruption in the process of divestiture with the politicians involved and often some of the large enterprises ended up being sold at prices far below their true values to some of the most introduced apparatchiks. Some of the bureaucrats and political elite have found their way to top positions in some of the former state owned enterprises. Even though Biya’s government expressed its desire to give priority to nationals in the sale of parastatals the opposite has been true. The reason is as Konings (ibid) explains the intense fear of the emergence of a national bourgeoisie that might be very difficult to deal with politically and therefore potential Cameroonians entrepreneurs are not given the necessary incentives. Foreigners are preferred.

The implementation of the SAPs III saw emphasis on tax reforms. The process proved complicated and there was no increase of revenue from taxes as envisaged. Thanks to the petroleum revenue which filled the gap. Competition in the world market was also a failure reason being that there were no funds to ensure the operation of the competitiveness committee. The parastatal SONEL was bought over by an American company with great promises to provide Cameroonians with constant power and electricity but things turned out to be worse than before.

In 1999/2000 saw the implementation of the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Fund by the IMF (ESAF/IMF) and the Structural Adjustment by the World Bank (SAC/WB). SAP III saw many more people laid off from their jobs, more unemployment and more poverty yet this was a

program to revamp the economy and create jobs and alleviate poverty while achieving a developed economy. It must be remarked here that only the name changed but the policies remained the same. It will further change to Poverty Reduction Strategy Program for both the IMF and the WB but the strategies and manner of implementation will just be the same.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusion**

Every child has the right to an education.

Education transforms lives and breaks the cycle of poverty  
that traps so many children. An educated child will make sure  
her own children receive an education

( <http://www.unicefusa.org/work/education/>)

### **The Effect of the Neoliberal Policies on Cameroonians**

The purpose of this study was to identify how the neoliberal policies have impacted education and culture in Cameroon. I argue that the enforcement of neoliberal policies has distorted the path to educational progress and brought an irreversible shift in the Cameroon culture.

Reports on education in Sub-Saharan Africa from UNESCO indicate that many young people of school age are not going to school. The report states that:

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for one half of all out of school children worldwide and has the highest out of school rate of all regions; almost one in four (23%) primary school age children have either never attended school or left school without completing primary School. Out of school figures in Sub-Saharan Africa have declined far less than in other regions, from 38 million in 1990 to 31 million in 2010.

Although statistics show that enrolment in Cameroon has generally progressed 38% in 2008, 42% in 2009, 47 in 2010 and 51 in 2011, it must be noted that many of these students for various reasons, most outstanding of which is their inability to pay the fees, drop out before the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. This holds true for both public and private institutions as well as secondary schools. University enrollment has also dropped with the cancellation of subsidies to students and the introduction of tuition and fees (Konings, 2011). The application of the SAPs which was

supposed to bring development and eradicate poverty has increased economic inequality and poverty without necessarily improving the chances of sustainable development, notes Carnoy (1995).

Education is an essential tool for the implementation of the SAPS especially because the SAPs require new technologies, new skills of production of goods and services and operates in high level competition (Hilgers, 2012; Caffentzis, 2002). Unfortunately education is listed among the ten Washington Consensus points as one of those not to be subsidized, but for which a fee is imposed thus limiting it to a rich few. Even though education is very important for the development of a society, it can only be achieved if some very basic needs like food and shelter have been achieved; therefore a necessity like paid education suffers when there is not enough money for very basic needs like food and shelter. The implementation of the SAPs in Cameroon saw many families out of jobs, the consequence of which was withdrawal of many children from school. Carnoy (1995, p. 657) confirms this in the following words, “whatever the intention behind the imposition of these conditions the results were almost certain to be a less equal income distribution and reduced access to and lowered quality of education for the poor.”

As discussed in this work, the Washington Consensus directly and indirectly affected education at all levels and culture. Its target has been economic development in the developing countries and the newly industrialized countries. Economic development in the neoliberal world is believed to be the perfect sign for growth with the market in control, not the state. Its imminent sign of growth is the GDP. Recent data from Cameroon shows progress in the GDP in the last few years from 2 percent to 3.2 percent but this has not affected the lives of the poor. As exemplified in chapter four, very little or almost nothing of the proceeds from the export of petroleum reaches the poor. The findings of many scholars have proven beyond any doubt that in



the last three decades neoliberal ideas have failed to bring about the preached economic development; rather an effort to implement these policies has wiped out the already registered progress that many developing countries made shortly after independence.

Just as much as education has been negatively affected so has the culture of the people. Many have wondered aloud, “Is this how the world was going to be?” Disrespect is breeding in the new Cameroonian society of joblessness and destitution. The young no longer show respect to the elderly. They would require payment for helping an elderly person carry something, a never heard of story in the past. Corruption has reached its heights and it is even said that the young students in K1 already practice corruption. Scamming or swindling has become an ordinary job. Young people, who do not have the funds to go to school, spend endless hours on the cyber cafes, surfing the Internet in the hope of advertising and/or selling exotic animals and other things, including quick gains and assets in economic ventures that do not exist. Their victims have been vulnerable rich people in the West, keen to make a financial killing without breaking a sweat. “Feymania” which means to ‘cheat’ or to ‘fool’ someone is fast becoming a dominant new culture. According to Konings (2011, p. 93) this new culture was carved out from a “socioeconomic group that was badly hit by the economic crisis and economic liberalization namely young men living in the slums of Cameroon’s largest cities...” Through their unwelcomed activities they have amassed a lot of wealth and consequently become influential even in the politics of the country. They now use their wealth to belong to political circles where they commandeer a lot of influence and authority. If these young people had the chance to better education probably their lives would have evolved differently.

Such failure resulted from a number of shortcomings. Neoliberal ideas function in a highly informative and technological environment which many of the developing countries lacked and

are still lacking. It means, therefore, that the citizens who carry out the transactions are supposed to be highly educated. Education is a public good and the corner stone of all development - be it economic, political or social. To abandon education to the whims of individuals seeking profit is to deprive the nation of some of its best talents that come from the poor of society. Public education which is available to all classes of people in the society and is provided for by the state contrasts with the demands of the neoliberal policy which requires that the state should be less involved in the provision of public goods namely education, health and infrastructure. In as much as the neoliberals pushed this through in the developing countries they continued to fund education in their own countries. Neoliberalism has, therefore, been a grave failure in bringing promised economic development to Africa and to Cameroon. Their programs have been heavily criticized for many years because they have constantly registered failure while bringing untold poverty to the people. Besides, in developing their policies they have created increased dependency by Africa on the richer nations. "The IMF cannot seem to understand that investing in ... [a] healthy, well-fed, literate population ... is the most intelligent economic choice a country can make" says Susan George (1990, pp. 143).

The experience of failure has shown that emphasis on economic development alone does lead to development. Although the IMF reports on Cameroon indicate that there is growth in the GDP, the IMF also notes that Cameroon is still vulnerable to shocks. According to some projections made on the GDP up to the year 2031, Cameroon's economy would still be in a precarious situation. 30 years of a terribly poor economy are not enough for the IMF and the WB to make people suffer so much just for their own interest in the name of progress? That would make a total of 47 years of misery for Cameroon (Nolan & Ghura, 2011). That notwithstanding the IMF and the WB should have known enough to acknowledge and correct their mistake rather

than keep on enforcing such terrible policies on people. It amounts to what someone has described as cutting off sub Saharan Africa from the world map. At this rate Cameroon will finance debts all its life till the next 20 generations and more (ibid, 2011). IMF and the WB needs to know that development has to be a holistic affair that takes care of the socio-cultural, emotional, political and psychological needs of the people, not just economic development.

### **The way forward for Cameroonians - where does the solution lie?**

It has been tested and proven that the only lasting solution to anyone's problem comes from inside the person. Considering that the issue of poverty in Africa south of the Saharan has existed since colonial times, and has persisted over the years in spite of all the aid from foreign donors, it can be said without doubt that the real solution to this problem will come not exclusively from without but from the Africans themselves. Ferguson (2006) refers to Mbeki's frank and unblinking African self-criticism in which he bluntly states that Africa's problems stem largely from misgovernment by African elites. Each African state needs an altruistic leader and people who are truly altruistic and ready to work with her/him to build and not just fill their bellies nor steal the country's wealth to invest in foreign banks. In 1998 Mbeki denounced

the petty gangsters who would be governors by theft of elective positions, as a result of holding fraudulent elections, or by purchasing positions of authority through bribery and corruption... The thieves and their accomplices, the givers of the bribes and the recipients, are as African as you and I. We are the corrupter and the harlot who act together to demean our continent and ourselves. Africa cannot renew itself when its upper echelons are a mere parasite of the rest of society, enjoying a self-endowed mandate to use their political power and define the uses of such power that sits exercise ensures that our Continent reproduces itself as the periphery of the world economy, poor and underdeveloped and incapable of development(<http://www.anc.za>)

As Mbeki indicates, the greater part of African problems stem from poor management or government. Africans must stand up for themselves and not allow themselves to be plundered by

their own political elites or foreigners in all sorts of ways. Whether Mbeki lived up to what he said or not is another issue, but his words carry the truth and the answer to Africa's problems. That said it must be added that if Africans do not assert themselves better and allow others to dictate to them against their best interests, then they will never succeed to be independent no matter how hard they try. However, it must still be iterated the G8 countries need to keep their eyes off of Africa's wealth and allow Africans to develop their continent.

Africans must become big investors in their own countries. It is incredible that Exxon Mobile and Chevron have invested heavily in the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline project while Cameroon and Chad only have 3% shares and this is contributed for them by the World Bank. If economic development is the focus, then Cameroon and Chad should have more shares so they can make more gains for their countries. The aid the G8 countries have given for the last 50 years has only enabled Africa to be more dependent on the West and to expose itself for more exploitation.

However, if the foreign countries truly worry about Africa as the IMF and WB piously express, they would step aside and give Africa space to breathe. Africa needs to pull resources together to develop its huge agricultural potential. Incomes from such investment could lift millions out of poverty and change the face of Africa, if only Africans could benefit from fair trade in transformed agricultural products or agri-business products, and if the West could end the trade-distorting subsidies in the hundreds of billions of dollars a year that it pays out to its own farmers.

We must note that before the colonialist came, the African communities had their systems of government and lifestyle. The colonialists considered Africa the Dark Continent and its people

primitive and set about to change their life style, culture and way of thinking into a European style. This they imagine was a way of civilizing the barbarians and bringing development to them. Had any development been achieved then, it would have been a Western generated development according to the European mind. It would never have been African development, but who determines what development is? Has the world got to think just in the same way to be considered developed? After many years of trying to Europeanize the Africans without succeeding, it should be clear to the West that such a strategy does not work. The West needs to rethink its ideas about the African and leave them alone. African development is best framed by Africans themselves following their philosophies of life, cultures and traditions. Such a development will be sustainable.

The fact that the African has not been totally Europeanized today is perhaps an indication that there are African values that are innate in themselves that cannot be destroyed. These are the aspects that identify an African and make her/him unique. Life has not got to be monotonous as in America with every Walgreens or Walmart or Cosco exactly like the other. The African vision of development cannot be exactly the same as Europe's to be considered developed. This does not mean that Africa has to remain as it is but progress or change has to be obtained in the terms of the African person.

It is important therefore for the African/Cameroonian people to define concretely what they want and how to get it. It is no use to lament on the negative effects of colonialism, neocolonialism and now neoliberalism. What matters is to start at this moment asking the right questions: How did we get to where we are now? What went wrong? How did we contribute to the wrongness? What can we do to correct it? What are we doing right now which is contrary to

where we want to be? What can we learn from our forgotten traditions which if applied today will help to bring us where we want to be?

Cameroon can borrow the idea of SANKOFA from the Akan people of Ghana which means “return to our roots to move forward” meaning we should reach back and gather the best of what the past has to teach us , so that we can achieve our full potential as we move forward (Kano 2006 p. 203). As earlier mentioned Africa already had a system of education which the Europeans worked hard to dismantle. It is important as part of the search for a solution to Africa’s problems to revisit its ancient practices.

Ignorance of what is going on in Cameroon is also a big drawback to progress. Many Cameroonians have no idea what is going on in the country therefore they are not able to claim responsibility and to work for change. The Cameroon government needs to step up and see to it that its citizens understand what is going on in the country economically and financially and be ready to work with them honestly. It took me two years of study to start grasping what is going on in Cameroon and why things are the way they are.

Lack of trust in self has been a major drawback to progress in Cameroon exemplified in the sale of parastatals. Why would the state prefer to sell the parastatals to foreign investors even at lower prices instead of selling them to the bourgeoisie Cameroonians who are ready to pay more money than other foreign investors? Cameroonians need to sit up and work as one people for the good of their country and its citizens. In that way employment of home experts would help to boost the economy and poverty will gradually be erased (konings, 2011). In fact standing up to plan and work as one body and taking responsibility for their lives will go a long way to free them from the longstanding effects of colonialism, neocolonialism and neoliberalism. In as much

as Europe and the U.S. need to keep their eyes off of Cameroon and Africa, so too do the Cameroonians and Africans need to stand up and take responsibility for their lives.

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